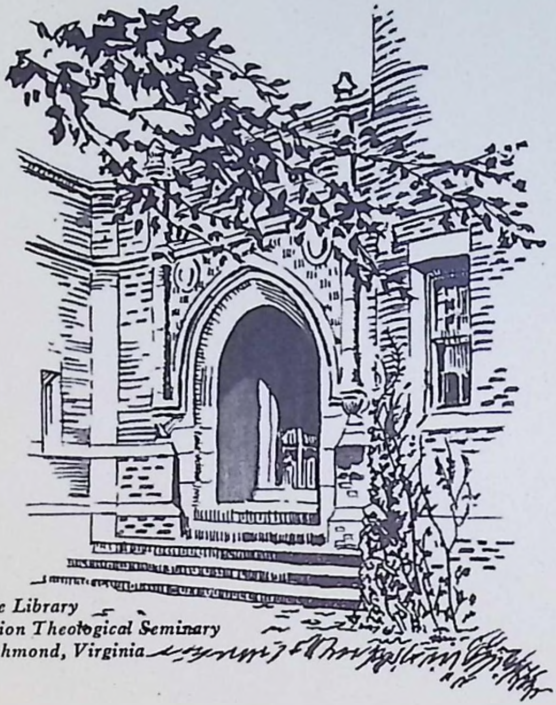

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This able study is primarily directed to defining the nature of the faith which relates mankind to the glorious Gospel of the grace of God.

"The subject of this volume," says its Author, "is stated in the form of a question that it may direct attention to a subject which has received too little investigation in American religious thinking. If the asking of this question so focuses discussion upon neglected areas of thought as to evoke other and more complete presentations of the subject, it will be more than justified."

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH?

Books by William Childs Robinson

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH?

THE CERTAINTIES OF THE GOSPEL

OUR LORD: AN AFFIRMATION OF THE DEITY OF CHRIST

COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AND THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH?

By

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Decatur, Ga.

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To
WILLIAM C. ROBINSON, JR.,
WITH THE PRAYER
THAT THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS
MAY BE
THE FAITH OF OUR CHILDREN ALSO.

INTRODUCTION

The Value of a Question

The question which an age ponders is a true index to the seriousness, or the levity, of that era and a valuable forecast of that which is to follow. Current American religious and philosophical thought is discussing the question, What do I think of God? Two centuries ago Jonathan Edwards made our intellectual leadership aware of a deeper question, What does God think of me?; and the Great Awakening followed. Modernism asks, How can I know that God is? Luther's spirit agonized with this other query, How can I know that God is gracious to me? "Liberalism's" quandary wrought Agnosticism; Luther's question brought in the Reformation.

The value of a question is threefold. It serves to arrest attention, to provoke thought, and to stimulate discussion. If the question is sufficiently pointed, the posing of it stirs thought and arouses consideration whether or not the several readers travel the same route or arrive at the identical conclusions of the asker. The subject of this volume is stated in the form of a question that it may direct attention to a subject which has received too little investigation in American religious thinking. If the asking of this question so focuses discussion upon neglected areas of religious thought as to evoke other and more complete presentations of the subject, the title of the book alone will justify the volume.

The Meaning of Our Question

The question we have offered for consideration needs to be carefully distinguished from another related, but distinct question which is again coming to the front. Micklem's *What Is the Faith?* has served a worthwhile purpose in bringing to the fore a consideration of the content of Christianity. This recent volume shares with Irenæus the conviction that Christianity is a positive datum, a given deposit of faith; though, in the opinion of the writer, its minimistic conclusions are less adequate summaries of the faith than Irenaeus' classical

passages.[1] However, our question is not that of either Irenæus or Micklem. By omission of the article we are directing attention, not to the content, but to the nature of faith. Their question concerns *the faith which is believed*, ours *the faith with which it is believed*. Obviously, the second question cannot be discussed without presupposing the first. Logically, the *fides quae creditur* precedes the *fides qua creditur*,[2] and the former determines the latter. The doctrine of faith derived from the consistent theism of the Reformed faith is the antithesis of the doctrine of faith which accords with the so-called ethical theism of modernism's finite god. In other volumes the writer has sought to present and defend the mighty acts of God which constitute the Gospel. In this work these great facts are reaffirmed; but the study is primarily directed to defining the nature of the faith which relates us to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

Theses

In order that our use of a question mark may not be construed as a sign of doubt or uncertainty, we wish at this point to supplement our question with three theses. Throughout the history of the universities theses have been used to set forth positions which their author was ready to defend. They invite and expect attack; but they serve to focus the issue and to minimize lost motion in the discussion. The Reformation began with the nailing of ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg on All Saints Eve, 1517; and the Reformed Reformation came to articulate statement in the Theses of Bern. It is, then, in accord with academic precedent and Protestant practice that one endeavor to re-affirm the true character of Christian faith by enunciating theses, and by undertaking in the pages which follow to elucidate and defend them. The writer maintains:

I.

That Christian faith is not a man-made conjecture, but a God-given certainty.

II.

That since its relation to God is of the essence of Christian faith, therefore any definition of faith which leaves God out

1. Against Heresies, I.x.l.; III. iv. 2.
2. Lang, A., Evangelical Quarterly, 6:1:71.

is inadequate and erroneous; or, that a true doctrine of faith involves a theology of faith, and not merely a psychology of faith.

III.

That Abraham is the Scriptural exemplar of faith; hence, everyone professing faith ought to compare his faith with that of the father of the faithful in order to ascertain whether his faith is of the type that will be reckoned for righteousness.

COMPOSITION

These studies have been worked out in contact with individuals and classes in Columbia Theological Seminary and the substance of the several discussions presented to sundry student groups. The first and second were addresses to annual conventions of the League of Evangelical Students, meeting in the Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia and at Queens-Chicora College, Charlotte. The third was suggested by the careful work of Dr. G. Vos in Biblical theology, and has been presented in abridged form to the Presbyterian Student Conference meeting at Mississippi State College, Starkville, to the students of Presbyterian College and Thornwell Orphanage at Clinton, S. C., and to the students of the Berry Schools, at Mount Berry, Ga. Parts of this volume in different form have appeared in the following periodicals: *The Evangelical Student*, April, 1935, *The Presbyterian*, March-April, 1937, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, July, 1937, and *Daily Manna*, 1937.

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CONTENTS

I. Christian Certainty: The Lost Chord in Modern Thought 15

II. Christian Faith: A Work of God, Not a Mere Wish of Man 39

III. The Faith of Abraham: The Father of All Those Who Believe 85

I.
CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY
The Lost Chord in Modern Thought

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."—I JOHN 5:9.

"Faith is an assurance of things hoped for, a certainty of things not seen."—HEB. 11: 1.

"The measure of faith is the testimony of God."
—THORNWELL.

"The certainty of our whole confidence consists in the blood of Christ."—AUGUSTINE.

"Are we producing reform, social or theological, faster than we are producing faith? Have we become more liberal than sure?"—P. T. FORSYTH.

I.

CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY

The Lost Chord in Modern Thought

Man doth not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah. However, our day has lost her anchor in the Word of God and is wandering hither and thither in a feverish quest for something that is certain and stable. The things that men live by are to be found neither in the plausible opinions of modernism, nor in the ecclesiastical canons of Romanism. The pillars of life are the certainties which God engenders in the hearts of His people by His Word and His Spirit.

I. The Loss of Certainty.

Nineteen hundred years ago the ancient world, which had learned from the Socratic dialogue, the uncertainty of human opinions, was reverberating with a new note of unshakeable certainty. First Thessalonians, one of the earliest documents of the Christian movement, presents the ground of this assurance. The Thessalonians had received the Gospel "not as the word of man but as it is in truth the Word of God." The Gospel came unto them as God's word in power and in demonstration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it came "in much assurance" (1:5; 2:13). When the gathering gloom

of national death settled over the Jews, the Christians among them drew near to the living God "in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22). Clement of Rome declares that the Christian apostles "went forth with a full conviction which was of the Holy Spirit" (I Clement 42:3, 4). Heffern declares that the essential characteristic of the first century faith is the certitude of faith, a certitude "which postulates a divine power and factor for its production." "The apostolic apologia is to lead to the direct certitude of faith."[1] When Justin Martyr was told that Plato taught that God could be apprehended only by the mind, he replied: "Is there, then, in our minds a power such as this and so great? Will the human intellect ever see God until it is furnished with the Holy Spirit?" Similarly, Irenæus insists that it is by the Spirit that we know Christ and ascend to God. "Without God, God is not known." Indeed, as late as the fourth century Basil, the Great, acknowledges that the revelation of the Only-begotten and the enlightening power of the Spirit of knowledge lead on to a certain knowledge of God.[2] In clear accord with this characteristic of early Christianity, Dr. C. W. Hodge, that prince of Reformed theologians, has well said: "This action of the Spirit . . . therefore gives not only an ability to believe, but also a certitude of faith."[3]

But with the change from early to medieval Christianity came also a change from certainty to uncertainty. Gregory the Great taught that the Christian

1. Apology and Polemic in the New Testament, p. 128 f. 77 f.
2. De Spiritu Sancto, 18:46-47.
3. Princeton Theological Review, January, 1913.

could never be certain that he had done enough to enter heaven. To meet this uncertainty the same Western theologian gave dogmatic sanction to the doctrine of Purgatory. As the Middle Ages progressed, the immediate action of God on the soul which Augustine had so gloriously vindicated, was pushed more and more into the background. The distinctions of logic, the mechanical efficacy of the sacraments and the plenary power of the human will took the place of the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit. The resulting "modern" theology of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century plunged such earnest souls as Luther and Calvin into an agony of doubt and uncertainty. Luther entered the monastery because he doubted whether he could do enough in any other life to make God gracious to him. Once in the monastery, scrupulous piety, pilgrimages, asceticism, confessions only increased the torturing uncertainty. Calvin could find no relief from the fear of eternal death in the rites and ceremonies of the Roman Church.

The Reformation was a rediscovery of assurance, a renewed enjoyment of primitive Christian certainty. This was true of Luther and his German and Scandinavian disciples, such as Olaus Petri, as well as the Reformed Protestants. In his *Places* composed at Marburg, Patrick Hamilton, the proto-martyr of the Scottish Reformation, declared "Faith is a certainty." John Knox testified: "Thou hast sealed into my heart remission of my sins, which I acknowledge and confess myself to have received by the precious blood of Jesus Christ once shed." Indeed, certainty was so character-

istic of historic Protestantism that the Council of Trent made a vigorous thrust at "the empty confidence of the heretics."

Calvin gave the clearest statement of this common Protestant heritage. Under his guidance Nicholas Cop insisted, "God cannot be worshipped in doubt." In one of his last utterances the great Genevan reiterated "we must be assured of our salvation in order to invoke God as our Father in full liberty." The austere Reformer was the defender of the very sure truth of God. On the other hand, if one wish a sixteenth century searcher for "the grand perhaps," he can find such a one in the vacillating wit of that day, Rabelais.

In an extended discussion of the Presbyterian and Puritan doctrine on this theme Thomas Smythe distinguishes between *objective* and *subjective* assurance. Referring to the former, he writes, in part, thus: "As regards the truths and doctrines of Scriptures, it is *the assurance of understanding;* as it regards the testimony of God concerning Christ and salvation through Him, it is *the assurance of faith;* as it regards the glory of future inheritance, it is *the assurance of hope.*"

In actually appropriating Christ and His salvation, the soul, then, attains a reflex, subjective, experimental assurance of faith, or, the internal evidence of a personal possession of Christ and an interest in Him. By apprehending the objective certain truth of the Gospel for salvation, we obtain also the subjective assurance of comfort. By appropriating the all-sufficient and all-willing Saviour, by the actual exercise of faith, hope

and peace, by the effects of the Holy Spirit's saving work in our souls producing spiritual graces, qualities, desires, convictions, zealous endeavors, and holy actions, the subjective assurance of faith is enkindled in the soul. Thereby the children of God are not given a bare conjectural and probable persuasion; but by the witness of God's Spirit with their spirits are infallibly assured that they are in a state of grace.[4]

Through a careful study of the Reformed confessions, Berkhof concludes that "the direct act of faith undoubtedly involves an element of assurance" and "an assurance is of the essence of faith," but he recognizes the logic which bases the *full* assurance of faith upon the promises of God as the first premise and the regenerated consciousness as the second.[5]

Thus, Berkof's position, while not identical, is at least similar to that earlier expressed by R. L. Dabney.[5a] Dabney holds that "the weakest babe in Christ . . . does derive, through his own consciousness of faith, some peace and hope" (183), and realizes that the attempt to "ground our hope on introspection may involve self-righteous illusions" (177). On the other hand, he insists that Scripture (I Cor. 11:28; II Cor. 13:5; II Pet. 1: 10; Rom. 5: 4; Phil. 1: 6; I John 3: 14, 19; 5: 2) authorizes one to find his assurance of being in Christ *partly* on the discernment of gracious principles and acts in oneself. 'The fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) are marks of God's sovereign new birth in the soul.'

4. Southern Presbyterian Review, 1848, pp. 99-119.
5. Berkhof, L., The Assurance of Faith, pp. 24-47.
5a. Dabney, R. L., Discussions, I:172-189.

From First John the author has been accustomed to teaching inquirers that the marks of regeneration are faith, love and right living. Dabney holds that self-examination has a part in the maturing of one's faith up to full assurance, as have contrition, correction and watchfulness in holy living. But in maturing one's assurance the great Virginian placed the emphasis upon the repetition of "simple acts of faith going out of sinful self to embrace a perfect Saviour and find rest in Him" (183). When his favorite sister lay dying he "explained to her that the best saints have always found the assurance of hope only by looking away from themselves to Christ."[5b]

From the *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti* John Calvin derived the certainty of eternal salvation, from the Witness of the Spirit John Wesley taught the certainty of present salvation, from the variableness of human opinion Neo-Protestantism proclaims the certainty only of uncertainty. The certitude which characterized historic Protestantism is wanting. Cadman properly says that faith, as understood by New York Roman Catholicism, meant submission to ecclesiastical authority; and as understood by New York Protestantism meant "a venture." Faith is defined as "the will to believe," "a betting one's life that there is a god," or "every man's life a gamble." Indeed, New York Modernism has so far forgotten the Trinitarian council of peace and the covenant of grace as to describe the life and death of our blessed Lord as a gamble,[6] or, in milder fashion,

5b. Johnson, T. C., Life and Letters of R. L. Dabney, p. 251.
6. Fosdick, H. E., The Power to See It Through, pp. 151 f.

to speak of "the uncertainties which shrouded Him."[7] The chord of certainty is absent from the harp of Neo-Protestantism. In place of assurance there is only the lure of a quest; in place of the sure Word of prophecy only the variables of human opinion. The relative, tentative, pragmatic, fleeting and mutually contradictory opinions of men have usurped the place of the absolute, the eternal, the unchanging truth of God. Neo-Protestantism has lost the meaning of that ancient motto which still adorns the seal of the Presbyterian General Assembly, U. S. A.:

> *"All flesh is as grass,*
> *And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass.*
> *The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth;*
> *But the Word of the Lord abideth forever.*
> *And this is the Word of the Gospel."*
> —I Peter 1: 24-25.

The shifting opinions of men have been substituted for the sure testimony of God.

II. The Cause of This Loss of Certainty.

As already indicated, the loss of certainty is the result of a progressive transference of Gospel emphases from God to man. Calvinism is a concentration of thought and life upon God. Modernism partakes of the humanistic concentration upon man. Man is uncertain, changeable, multitudinous; God is one, eternal, certain. With Him there is no variableness. Modern man has

7. Coffin, H. S., Some Christian Convictions, pp. 156-7.

lost the sense of certainty because he has turned from God to man. He will never find that which he has lost until he returns to God.

Augustine believed God that he might know. The great Christian philosopher held that "in the last analysis, God is the surety for the validity of our knowledge." Even the trustworthiness of man's consciousness thus rests on the veracity of God. But modern philosophy began in a different key. With Descartes a characteristic method of reasoning is to doubt everything in order that from one's own doubting mind may arise the whole pyramid of knowledge. This effort to make the certainty of God and of external reality rest on one's own ego is like balancing a pyramid on its apex. And a doubting consciousness is a poor ultimate foundation for a scheme of thought that seeks clarity and certainty. Small wonder, then, that modern philosophy capitulated to the skepticism of Hume and the uncertainties of Dewey's instrumentalism. We could have learned from the ancients that when "man is the measure of all things," then "all things flow" and lo, "whirl is king." The only city that hath foundation is the city whose builder and maker is God. God is the only fulcrum on which the lever of certainty can rest.

However, modern man, not content with setting up himself intellectually, insisted on undertaking his own salvation in the power of his own will. To the Cartesian doctrine of the sufficiency of human reason Kant added the autonomy of the human will. Then the Enlightenment blossomed out with its cry of the complete enfran-

chisement of man. The liberation of man heralded by the French Revolution meant emancipation from all Divine authority. No more was God to think for him; no longer was God to lift his soul. In fairness to the noted philosopher it should be said that Kant was not quite so modern as his disciples. Kant did recognize the radical evil in man. Many of his disciples, such as E. C. Moore of Harvard, deeply lament this "lapse" in their master. But even Kant "came in the end to an appeal to the will, the wisdom, and the power of man" (Bavinck). In his followers the gradual minimizing of the sense of evil continually lessened any need for direct saving grace. In place of the Protestant doctrine of the bondage of the will, Kantianism set up the freedom of the will. Luther and Calvin taught that man enslaved by sinful affections could only be liberated by the sovereign regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Even prominent Presbyterians following Kant and rejecting Calvin set up the freedom of the will in spiritual things. Confidence in the power of the human will plunged Luther into the depths of despair. The reestablishment of the autonomy of the will in the things of God has again sunk our thought into the whirlwind of uncertainty. It can have no different result. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" A salvation that rests on human voluntarism is as weak and uncertain as the wicked heart of a man.

Appealing to three of the best minds of the sixteenth century, Erasmus, Luther and Calvin, Dean Doumergue

shows that the bondage of the will is the center of the center of the Protestant Reformation, the most distinctive difference between Protestant and Romanist. Warfield and Bavinck declare that Kant's assertion that man's ability equals his responsibility is just a reassertion of Pelagianism. The exchange of the Reformed doctrine of enslaved wills liberated by the sole regenerative action of the Holy Spirit for this "modern" doctrine of a spiritual conversion by the power of man's own will means forsaking the certainties of Calvinism, for the uncertainties of Arminianism.[8] Calvin's doctrine that our faith does not rest on the shifting opinions of men, but is graven on our hearts by the finger of the living God, carries the assurance that God is for us. And God does not change the purpose of grace which He formed before times eternal. The modern notion that faith is making oneself believe by the naked power of the human will that which does not possess sufficient evidence to constrain intellectual assent leaves faith and salvation as uncertain as the shifting will of man. Assurance diminishes in proportion as human autonomy is glorified.

Uncertainty is further enhanced by that theory of religious knowledge developed by Kant, Lotze, and Ritschl which is now regnant in "liberal" circles. Religious knowledge is denied the status of scientific or genuine knowledge. Only that which can be seen or fully demonstrated by unaided human reason is recog-

8. Recent studies indicate that Wesley moved in the opposite direction, that is, away from the dominant Arminianism of the Established Church toward (not to) the Augustinianism of Luther and Calvin.

nized as real knowledge. Then under the demands of the practical will, or the whole moral and spiritual nature of man, God and a world of moral ends are postulated in order to supply the needs of the religious nature. "Religion is the reaction of the human mind to the sense of value and presents the highest function of the human mind." The whole scheme reminds one of the spider who weaves her web wholly from the tissues of her own body. Applying this epistemology to the Christian religion, the Ritschlian offers to show that the Bible is "spiritually" true because it preserves certain religious values. He holds that we have no direct historical knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; but only the record of the religious experiences of those who lived close to Him. Further, all immediate and supernatural influence of the living Lord or of the Holy Spirit is denied as vicious mysticism. The result is that man does not treat directly either with a revelation from the living God, or with the historical Jesus; but only with human thoughts and words in relation to each. Every transcendent element in the genesis of faith is eliminated. The psychological acts of the early disciples are substituted for immediate contact either with the living Christ or with the historical Jesus Christ. And so autonomous modern man is surrounded, hemmed in by a wall of human variables. The fog deepens. Man changes his own heart under the stimulus of other men's experiences. Man, man, man—but the veracity of God has passed out of the picture, and with it the assurance of salvation.

This plan may have been tolerable for the philosophy of nineteenth century German idealism. The leaders of that school thought that they could transcend the boundaries which separated God, external reality and man and gather the three into a monistic whole. But the inescapable dualism between the Creator and the creature again asserted itself. This is the bombshell which Barth has dropped on the playground of "liberal" theology. How can the creature reason or the depraved will project itself from creaturehood to Creator? How can the temporal reach up to the eternal? Can sin-blinded creatures, today, erect a tower that will reach any nearer heaven than did Babel in the plain of Shinar? If a man start with his spiritual needs, or his moral imperative by what logic can he reason to the Infinite? Is the finite capable of attaining the Infinite? The shades of a scornful Dane rise up to accuse us of committing the logical error of passing over into a different category. Kierkegaard wrote: "In general, is it at all possible by the consideration of the gradually unfolding consequences of something to arrive at a conclusion different in quality from what we started with? Is it not sheer insanity (providing man is sane) to let one's judgment become so altogether confused as to land in the wrong category . . . in an altogether different, in fact infinitely different category?" Hence the road to knowledge that man builds from earth to heaven has become more and more confused. *If* certain premises were admitted, then certain conclusions seemed to follow. But now even after the premises have been

accepted with acknowledgment that they cannot be demonstrated, the conclusion is still wrapped in uncertainty. The irremovable dualism of Creator and creature yawns between. Neo-Protestantism is left in the black night of doubt with nothing better than the faith of a gambler.

Once again as of yore sin has deceived man into setting up for himself. Forgetting God, the fountain of living water, man has hewn out cisterns for himself; and now finds them broken cisterns that hold no water. And, "if there is no certainty in Christianity, there is no certainty anywhere."[9]

III. The Path of Gospel Certitude.

There is one way out. The paths of men do not lead to the sure knowledge of God. They lose themselves in the shifting sands of the desert of uncertainty. *The only road to the certainty of God and His salvation is the road which God builds, not man.* The only way for the sinful creature to know the holy Creator is for God to reveal Himself. Neither man's science, logic, scholarship nor paradoxes can scale the steep ascent to heaven. God must take the initiative and make Himself known, or else the darkness abides. Religion is a relationship between two entities, God and man. In the very nature of the two, God, the first entity will determine the conditions upon which the relationship will take place. Religion is either revelation or it is illusion. In every way in which the Creator enters into relationship with

9. Johnson, W. H., Humanism and Christian Theism, p. 154.

the creature He does so as the Lord, the ultimate Subject, "the everlasting Thou" by whom the creature is addressed as by the Lord.

Man's sin blinds his heart to the glory of Divine holiness. As long as I only speak out of my heart some Feuerbach will dissolve my religion into a case of wishful thinking, or the mere objectifying of a subjective fear complex. As Augustine has pointed out, man needs a revelation and it is eminently reasonable for him to receive one, because he is finite, immature, and sinful. Refusing this thought, the "Enlightenment" first assumed that man could solve all questions by clear and necessary reasoning. But now even "the age of reason" is elevating to the status of a dogma that neither the philosophy nor the science which refuses to receive knowledge from God can discover the secret of the Universe.[10] Will man again realize his bankruptcy sufficiently to look to his Maker? "What reason can never do, the Christian Revelation has done. It has revealed to us, among other things, what is the appropriate attitude of the human to the Divine; it is the attitude of faith."[11] God hath spoken to me in His Word applied by His Spirit and confirmed by His sacraments. Religion is this address of God to the soul and the answer of the soul which He hath regenerated to her Lord. There is an ultimate deeper than the human ego and its thinking, namely, "by the grace of God I am what I am."

Christianity is not primarily man's quest for God,

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10. Lamont, D., Christ and the World of Thought, pp. 5-12, 175. Cf. Heim, K., The Church of Christ and the Problems of Today, p. 18.
11. Ibid.

but God's quest for and conquest of man. It is the Divine life which the Holy Spirit plants in the heart. True religion is a reacting cult. Human piety is the response of regenerate hearts to stimuli wrought by the transcendent God.

God has intervened for the salvation of sinners and for the vindication of His righteousness in preserving a guilty creation. History not only has its source in the will of the Creator, its fabric in His decrees; it also has its theodicy in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. A superficial view may scorn the intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ as "accidental historical truths." A deeper insight recognizes the Cross as "the hinge of history." On the ground of the substitutionary death of Christ propitiating His holy wrath, God decreed history and accomplished salvation. General or "eternal" truths alone could never save guilty sinners or glorify the holy God in allowing or in redeeming wicked creatures. Truth which finds its source in the bosom of the eternal God declares the justice and judgment of the Lord upon guilty sinners. The interposition of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope of redemption from the just judgment of these eternal truths. He bore our sins in His own body on a particular tree nineteen hundred years ago. Further, the gracious God who gave His only begotten Son to take our place and bear our punishment hath caused the great facts of the Gospel of His love to be embodied in a trustworthy record. God hath set Christ forth the propitiation for our sins, the mercy seat for sinners.

Two things are necessary for sight: light and a seeing eye. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit illumines the eyes of our hearts to apprehend this blessed saving light. Faith does not rest on the shifting opinions of man. It is graven on our hearts by the finger of the living God. Faith is an intuition awakened by the Holy Spirit, who uses His own instrument, the Word, to make Christ and His saving Cross present to our hearts.

This faith is a certainty, an assurance, a certain and steadfast knowledge. We do not claim that faith is complete knowledge; we do maintain that it is valid and certain knowledge. The secret of assurance lies in not allowing the things we do not know to unsettle our confidence in the things we do know. Science and popular opinion apply the term knowledge preeminently to matters of observation. Tennyson says, "For knowledge is of things we see." And yet it may well be doubted if our knowledge of any object of sense perception is ever complete. The physicist knows the bench on which he is sitting better than does a Gullah negro. But does he know it exhaustively? Can he define the ultimate entities of which its atoms are composed? Even the neighbor in black has a certain knowledge that the bench rests and supports his tired frame. Further, all knowledge of the object is a knowledge of the object as it was, not as it is. The knowledge of the North Star is valid to guide the ship across the seas. But the North Star itself may have been blotted out several years ago so far as the mariner who is guiding the ship knows.

The light which guides him left the star many years ago. Apart from an ultimate reference to God there is no assurance that the knowledge of an object as it appears to the observer, is a knowledge of the object as it is. To have any knowledge of external reality one has to presuppose the trustworthiness of his own senses, the trustworthiness of the functioning of his mind in interpreting sensation, the validity of the universals of knowledge, the reality manifested in the phenomena, and a valid correlation of the knowing subject and the known object. Each of these presuppositions ultimately rests upon faith in the Creator and Sustainer of the senses, of the reason, of external reality and of the correlation of the knower and the known. God is the only foundation for any certainty. But the links by which man attains to this commonly accepted knowledge are so many that opportunities exist for error and uncertainty.

In diametric opposition to Kant we maintain that Christian faith is not a less certain knowledge than the knowledge of things we see, but a more certain knowledge. We do not have a complete knowledge of God; but neither does the scientist have a complete knowledge of the things he sees. We know that God who hath a complete knowledge of us has made Himself known to us. By God's Word and Spirit we know that God tells the truth and that the truth telling God says He is propitiated toward us for Christ's sake. God tells the truth. God says He forgives my sins for Jesus' sake. I put these two propositions together and I have as truly

an assurance of salvation as the mathematician has of his axioms.

God is the source of certainty. And I am nearer to the source of certainty in Christian faith than the scientist is in his observations. God gives me this faith. He is the primary Knower, the ultimate Subject, the everlasting Thou. By the illumination of the Holy Spirit the living Christ calls me into His fellowship. This call of the Eternal Present is a knowledge of things as they are and not only of things as they were. The call of the gracious Creator makes me know that I am His saved creature. This call is the direct address of the Source of all certainty. Faith is not like science separated from God by a long chain of links conducive to uncertainty. As has been well said, "No authority can be higher than the direct testimony of God, and no certainty can be greater than that imparted by the Spirit shining upon the Word."[12]

Christian faith rests neither on soulless objectivity nor on formless subjectivity, but on the testimony of God, objectively revealed in His Word, subjectively confirmed by His Spirit. Faith rests as definitely on given fact as realism ever required, and is as self-evident truth as idealism ever discerned, and yet "is distinguished from all other forms of cognition and perception by being alone fully concrete." The whole finished work of Christ recorded for us in the inspired Scriptures is the given authoritative word of revelation. And in His internal witness, God, the Holy Spirit, applies this sav-

12. Thornwell.

ing word to the heart of the believer so that the word given once for all speaks today as an inner certainty. Or, as Luther is cited by Brunner, "If you are asked: How do you know it? you should answer: I know it because I so hear it in the word and sacrament and absolution, and because the Holy Spirit says the very same in my heart, viz., that Christ became man for me, died and rose again . . . i.e., it agrees with the Holy Scripture, just as the Holy Spirit writes it in your heart."[13] Hence, "I must know it as certainly as that three and two make five; for it is certain, and even if all the councils said otherwise, I know they lie. What convinces me in this matter? Not any man, but only the truth which is so completely certain that no one can deny it."[13] We know Him that is true (I John 5: 20) by His Word which is truth (John 17: 17), and the witness of His Spirit which is likewise the truth (John 15: 26; I John 5: 7).

If it were necessary we could show that our knowledge of God is capable of as valid an exposition as modern epistemology's account of the knowledge of external reality. According to the critical realists I know this desk by means of an idea of the desk. The desk and the idea are existentially two, but cognitively one. Or the idea of the desk has revelatory value so that through its medium I come to a valid knowledge of the desk. Analogically we affirm that God and His Word are existentially two; but that the Word, corresponding

13. Brunner, E., The Philosophy of Religion, p.29, cf. p.24.

in the analogy to the idea, has revelatory value. Hence through the Word the regenerate heart attains a valid knowledge of God.

If our epistemologist be a neo-realist or an intuitionalist he will insist upon the compresence of the knower and the known. He will maintain that I immediately perceive or have a direct prehension of this desk. Whether or not his epistemology is valid we can satisfy the yearning of his spirit for immediacy of knowledge in our doctrine of faith. God is not only known through the medium of His Word. Wonder of wonders, in His regenerative activity the transcendent Creator Spirit does enter the heart so that we are conscious of the gracious effects of the Holy Ghost.

Or, considering perception from a more strictly psychological viewpoint, Dr. Frazer Hood of Davidson College offers numerous examples from experience and several from Scripture (I Sam. 3:3-9; Mk. 8:23-25; John 12: 29-30) to show that a background of experience is as necessary as sensation to a true perception. The image on the retina varies, while the essence or meaning of an objective thing remains constant. That is, the image is not identical with the idea and the process of perception involves both the external sensory stimulus and the meaning which the mind gives to this sensation. The preparation of the heart and mind is as essential to a true interpretation as is the sensory image.

In the process of faith, the regenerative action of

the Holy Spirit prepares the mind to perceive the true meaning of the Gospel when the promises of the Word are received through sense impression. This twofold action, so analogous to general perception, is just the plan which God has ordained to work faith in us and thereby unite us to Himself in the bonds of an everlasting covenant (Isaiah 59: 21). Thus even on the basis of analogies drawn from current epistemology we can justify Calvin's definition of faith: "It is a steady and certain knowledge of the divine benevolence toward us, which, being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and confirmed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

Only we must not be misled by the last analogy. Ultimately we do not think of faith as a knowledge which begins with ourselves. We have come to know God, or rather to be known of God (Gal. 4: 9). Faith is the illumination of the Holy Spirit. God awakens in us an intuition which unites us to Christ in our effectual calling. On the basis of that which the Lord Jesus Christ did for us once for all the Holy Spirit calls us to decision *now*. Faith is the gift of God. It is the recognition that God knows us. "The firm foundation of God standeth having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.'" (II Tim. 2: 19). Faith is the sign of the Eternal in the arena of time. It is the evidence that the God who changeth not is for us. And as Calvin would add: "If God be for us who can be against us?" (Rom. 8: 31). Faith is certain because

it rests on the testimony of God. When our faith is an acknowledgment (Col. 2:2) of God's knowledge of us, then our quest for certainty has found its abiding anchor in the veracity of God.

This certainty is most beautifully illustrated in the home-going of Caspar Olevianus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism. As the end drew near chapter after chapter of the Bible was read to him and he testified that each one was refreshing and sweet. Then at his request those around his bed sang over to him Luther's,

> *"O Holy Ghost, grant our desire,*
> *With childlike faith our souls inspire.*
> *And leave us not at last when we*
> *Forsake this scene of misery;*
> *But, Lord have pity."*

His colleague Alsted asked him, "Dear brother, you are now without doubt assured of your salvation in Christ, as you have taught many others; is it not so?" Laying his hand on his heart, Olevianus breathed his last word,

"*Certissimus*"—"I am most sure."

II.

CHRISTIAN FAITH

A Work of God, Not a Mere Wish of Man

"So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ."—ROM. 10: 17.

"And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth."—I JOHN 5:6.

"The true faith is not the work of man, and therefore the faith which is manufactured or imagined will not avail in death. . . . The true faith is the heart's utter trust in Christ, and God alone awakens this in us."

—LUTHER.

II.

CHRISTIAN FAITH

A Work of God, Not a Mere Wish of Man

Faith is the attitude of consciousness which lies at the basis of the whole psychical life. "Our science is as much 'founded on faith' as our holy religion." Science is based on causal thinking; and yet, as Hume has shown, the law of cause and effect can never be proved, it must be received *by faith.* "The mind must *accept* something before it can have anything to reason about." "Faith receives what is given; reason clarifies and interprets what is given to faith."[1]

Christian faith is the foundation of life, the inspiration of devotion, the invisible chain which links this temporal existence with eternity. Serene amid the screaming hurricane of time, faith supplies the steel girders for the structure of the soul. As "the light of the Eternal lingering in the soul," faith carries in her bosom promises for this life and for that which is to come.

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1. So Hume, Whitehead, A. E. Taylor and D. Lamont in the latter's Christ and the World of Thought, pp. 133-136. cf. Girardeau, J. L., Discussions of Philosophical Questions, p. 26.

Interest in Faith

There are evidences of a wide interest in and a desire to stimulate faith. For example, the National Preaching Mission recently inaugurated by the Federal Council of Churches had as one of its primary objectives "the re-establishment of faith." This action is a pleasing contrast to the youth movement conducted by the same council a few years earlier. The program of the earlier crusade, set forth in the pamphlet *Youth For Christ,* was to enlist youth in any good or supposedly good work on the assumption that they were thereby being united to Christ. The word faith was scarcely to be found in the pamphlet and one of the so-called good works was to crash the creeds and amalgamate the denominations. Perhaps those who wrote this platform for youth did not realize that the creeds were not on trial. At any rate, Protestants rejoice in a turn from works to faith and give thanks for every sermon in which the Mission preached Christ (Phil. 1:18). However, whether one consider the content or the nature of Christian faith he cannot look with too much confidence upon the Preaching Mission as the instrument for a great revival of faith. That soundness in the Christian faith was not a requirement for membership in the original Preaching Mission is specifically seen in the fact that prominent members of this mission were authors and advocates of *Re-Thinking Missions,* the laymen's inquiry which has been received

with general disapproval by those who value sound doctrine. And when one considers the nature of faith, he finds that several definitions of faith lacking any reference to God were popularized by members of the mission. These will call for examination and criticism shortly. In view of the divergent facts enumerated, perhaps the best one can do is to thank God for this evident interest in faith as a gleam in darkness and pray Him to make it grow. And one may find encouragement in the story of John Wesley. When the noted Methodist leader, doubting whether he had real faith, asked advice of Peter Boehler, he received this wise reply: "Preach faith until you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith." And so we hope that the preaching of "faith" in America will continue until every preacher has a consciously Christian faith, and then because each one has this faith he will continue to preach it.

I. Humanistic Conceptions of Faith.

The current difficulty, then, is that the whole glorious heritage of faith is being jeopardized by inadequate definitions of faith. Pragmatism in philosophy and Ritschlianism in religion have begotten an American modernism which glories in the flimsiest possible conceptions of faith. John Dewey defines faith as "trust in the possibilities of experience itself." Entirely rejecting "religious supernaturalism," or any support "above and beyond experience," he insists that "experi-

ence itself is the sole ultimate authority" furnishing to man both "organizing principles and directive ends."[2] This "faith has no *beyond.*" Indeed, for Dewey "God" is only a symbol for the ideas presented by human imagination.[3] This is, of course, the humanistic conception; for humanism "is the direct opposite of supernaturalism, which separates God and man to such an extent that man is considered helpless, save as he is the recipient of truth, virtue, and happiness from above."[4]

The marvel is not that Dewey should use faith in this humanistic sense; but that so many ministers whose heart faith must rise above humanism's limitations should be advocating such depotentiated concepts of faith. Professor Lamont points out that the conception of faith as a vague conjecture is a reversion to the old Greek usage of the term, that neglects the great meaning which Jesus poured into it; and that it is an exclusive attention to the psychological or *formal* aspect of faith which disregards the theological or *material* aspect. "From Feuerbach, onwards, faith has often been represented as a projection of our own thoughts and desires upon the screen of the Eternal."[5]

In one of the popular religious books of the day faith is defined as "the soul's invincible surmise," a euphonious phrasing of the older definition, "a betting one's life that there is a god." This volume is the best

2. Dewey, John, What I believe, Forum, Mar., 1930: The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy, p. 17.
3. A Common Faith.
4. Richards, G. W., Christian Ways of Salvation, p. 222b.
5. Lamont, Ibid, 125-126.

evidence of how little such conception can advance a groping mind. The brilliant author ends his discussion with the doubter still in utter uncertainty as to God. He cannot say either that God is, or what God is. The closing chapter carries the reader to the abyssmal agnosticism of a "Grand Perhaps," to the point where Christian fact is engulfed in modern doubt. "If God there be," He is "an Unknown," or "the Unknown." Lamont's remark is apropos. "Thus faith, in spite of the New Testament and Christianity, is relegated to the sphere of vague conjecture or of feeling which may or may not be useful, but which has nothing to do with what is true. This naive and mischievous assumption, when logically pursued, leads straight to skepticism in everything."[6] Occupying a very different position, Troelsch frequently spoke of the "agnosticism" of this theology of experience. Even such a worldling as Peer Gynt recognizes

> *"One needs in days of trial*
> *Some certainty to put one's trust in."*

In the apostolic writings, great[7] glowing certainties light a path by which the Spirit leads doubting souls to a firm assurance of God and his salvation. Paul speaks thus, "I know whom I have believed."

And yet modernism often gives an even poorer concept of faith. Instead of postulating faith on the soul,

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6. Lamont, ibid. 275-276. cf. Barth's contrast between "the medernist" and "the evangelical faith," The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 88.
7. Cf. Robinson, W. C., The Certainties of the Gospel.

"on the whole man and his whole world,"[8] an aspect or 'part' of the personality is abstracted and faith represented as the act of this faculty or function of the ego. The classic American example of this thinking, is, of course, William James' concept of faith as 'the will to believe.'

Now "Faith is voluntary, but not a mere act of the will."[9] Faith involves present decision. Jesus said "if any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). But when this text is used as a basis for preaching the doctrine found in *The Will to Believe* the position of our Lord is misrepresented. In the first place, Jesus revealed the Infinite and Almighty God; James taught a finite and limited 'God.' The two conceptions differ so completely that Lamont asserts "a finite God is a contradiction in terms";[10] and even Shailer Matthews confesses, "one cannot grow enthusiastic over a God who is in danger of cosmic bankruptcy, even though pragmatism be His receiver and humanity His self-certified accountant."[11]

Out of these radically different doctrines of God have come differences as to the meaning of faith. Jesus offered adequate objective evidence and when He found that men would not acknowledge Him because they loved the glory that was of men more than the glory

8. Buttrick, Christian Faith and Modern Doubt, p. 262.
9. L. Berkhof.
10. Lamont, ibid, cf. also, "A God who is within the process is no God God at all," p. 161. "A 'god in the flux' which cannot be God." p. 175.
11. Matthews, S., Religion in the New Age, Forum, Feb. 1931.

that was of God He put His finger on the unyielded will as the center of the difficulty. The submission of the will rather than the satisfaction of the understanding is the primary duty which the creature owes the Creator. But James errs when he offers to supply a lack of objective evidence by a subjective power of willing. He suggests that an Alpine traveler can hurl himself across a yawning gulf; if, by an exertion of the will, he makes himself believe he can. Only, as Fulton J. Sheen has pointed out,[12] this illustration absolutely fails to prove the thing it undertakes to prove. The objective reality of the rock on which the jumper is to land is the one thing that needs no proving. The rock was there as evident to the naked eye before the leap as after it. The great philosopher used an illustration to prove the objective reality of God, which proved absolutely nothing as to objective reality. On the other hand, Jesus had already proved the fact of His Deity by His words and His works before He asked for the yielding of the will.

Again Jesus both preceded and followed this statement of the will by a recognition of man's sinful estate and his need of regenerating grace. Near the beginning of His ministry when many were professing to believe on His name because of the signs He did, Jesus declined to trust Himself to them (John 2: 23-24) and instead solemnly told their teacher, "Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom

12. Sheen, F. J., God and Intelligence.

of God." "Ye must be born again" (John 3: 1-15). Later He told those who had no abiding faith that they were servants of sin, and children, not of God, but of the devil (John 8:34-44). Jesus recognized that true and abiding faith is the work of the Holy Spirit; James teaches that faith is the mere act of the human will.

B. M. Palmer used the compass needle to illustrate the part of the will in believing. The needle in its compass box is protected from the constraints of mechanical impingement, and free to turn as it will. Magnetize the needle and it ever points to the North; demagnetize it and it moves aimlessly hither and yonder. The will of fallen, sinful man wanders here and there, first after one and then another worldly objective; the will of the regenerated nature seeks the path of virtue just as the magnetized needle reverts to the line of the North. The concept of a glorified human will with plenary power to turn in faith to God is the diametric opposite of the doctrine of Augustine, Luther and Calvin that we attain freedom by grace, not grace by freedom. Attractive as it may be to the American ego, it offers cold comfort for one's declining years after the hurly-burly of life has softened or sapped the resiliency of many an iron will. Moreover, it flatly contradicts Paul's declaration that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy."

A number of current religious psychologists seem to have decided that the supreme religious faculty is the imagination, that it is even more powerful than the will. Accordingly we hear that 'faith' is the triumph of

imagination over sensation', or that 'faith is only imagination grown up.' Now, no one who reads Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* can deny that imagination may have a potent effect upon the life of faith; but no Protestant who reads this work can hold that imagination correctly guided Newman's life. The older apologists felt constrained to deny Hume's contention that faith cannot be distinguished from imagination. One does not wish to oppose a proper recognition of this great God-given faculty which wings the eloquence of the masters of assemblies. But are we not playing into the hands of humanism when we are content to characterize faith in terms of imagination at the very moment when John Dewey is so vehemently insisting that God is only a symbol of the ideals presented by human imagination, and when Hauer and Rosenberg are offering "the giant projection of human wants and feelings," the illusions of their own creation as the new "German faith"?[13] Luther has warned us that "the faith which is manufactured or imagined" will, in the hour of death, "be overcome, and utterly overthrown by sin, by the devil and by the pains of hell";[14] and in distinction from the majority of current religious books *The Institutes* sharply distinguish between the living God who has revealed Himself in His Word and the figments of human imagination. Moreover, the Scripture tells us that God saw that every imagination of the

13. Heim, K., The Church of Christ and the Problems of the Day, p. 40.
14. Quoted Lindsay, A History of the Reformation, I: 446.

thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6: 5).

Complete pragmatism defines faith as "tendency toward action,"[15] to which may be added the neo-realist statement that "faith is a conviction on which a man is willing to act."[16] Shall we forget Jesus' reverent refusal to put God to the test; and instead follow Herr Hitler's logical development of pragmatism in *Mein Kampf*? Here *Der Fuehrer* asserts that "Success is the only earthly judge of right and wrong." Now faith fruits into action, but the whole contention of Paul and Luther is that faith, the faith of Abraham, the faith of a Christian, is different from works (Rom. 3: 28; Gal. 2: 16; Eph. 2: 8-9; II Tim. 1: 9).

Finally, there are many pious people who insist that while the intellect is not able to attain faith in God, the heart, the poetic qualities or æsthetic sensibilities of the soul can. Calvin realized that faith was more of the heart than of the head, of the affections rather than of the mind; and Pascal has said that the heart hath her reasons which the reason cannot know. But Calvin was careful to affirm that this faith was graven on our hearts *by the finger of the living God*; whereas, many current advocates of heart faith and mysticism represent it as a human attainment. To rest faith on the mere experiences of the human heart is as humanistic, if not as rationalistic, as it is to rest faith on intellectual opinions. Jeremiah reminds us that "the heart is de-

15. Dewey, Forum, March, 1930.
16. Perry, R. B., Present Philosophical Tendencies.

ceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9).

Any faith which is merely the act of the creature resting upon premises and inferences drawn from creation is dead and doomed, as Shakespeare has it in *The Tempest*:

> *"Like the baseless fabric of this vision,*
> *The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,*
> *The solemn temples, the great globe itself,*
> *Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,*
> *And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,*
> *Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff*
> *As dreams are made on: and our little life*
> *Is rounded with a sleep."*

Thus the return to faith, if we may for the moment call it a return, is a return to the psychology of faith. A faith which is defined exclusively in terms of man is not a return to God. It will not be a return to God, until it becomes also and primarily a return to the theology of faith. In contrast to these definitions which characterize faith exclusively in terms of the soul, or some one of its vital functions, the men whose names are remembered as the fathers of faith drew up definitions, recognizing the human element to be sure, but without that tragic neglect of God's part in establishing faith which is so distinctive of current American definitions. In his Small Catechism Luther teaches: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost

has called me through the Gospel." John Calvin offers as "a complete definition of faith" the following: "It is a steady and certain knowledge of the divine benevolence towards us, which being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds, and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit."[17] A collation of the thirtieth, thirty-first, and eighty-sixth answers of the Shorter Catechism likewise gives an adequate definition. B. M. Palmer does not compress his thoughts into such a concise form as Calvin. But those who read his discussion of *The Assurance of Faith* find that he there stresses the necessity for the activity of God, the Son, in revealing truth, and of God, the Holy Spirit, in inspiring Scripture and in enlightening men to receive it; and indicates both when he says: "This spiritual apprehension and appropriation of revealed truth is what we understand by the word faith."[18]

By an ever increasing number of European theologians of varied viewpoints—Barth, Thurneysen, Brunner, Heim, Adam, Sasse, Gogarten, Lamont, Schaeder—faith is defined with reference to God. Erich Schaeder endorses Luther's definition and further states: "Faith, wrought by the spiritual drawing-nigh of the gracious God in Christ, is a complete, boundless trust in the sufficient grace or love of God. Thus it is something absolute."[19] Except God be the Alpha and the Omega of faith; except faith grip God, because by work-

17. The Institutes.
18. The Threefold Fellowship and the Threefold Assurance, p. 124.
19. Theozentrische Theologie, II: 259.

ing faith in us God hath first gripped us, we are, of all men, most miserable. We have no propitious heavenly Father, no covenant blood, no forgiveness of sins, no everlasting arms of comfort, no assurance of things hoped for, no joy in the Holy Ghost, no blessed Lord and Divine Saviour; we have only one another.

II. The Biblical Doctrine of Faith.

The Biblical doctrine of faith involves, then, both (a) a theology of faith and (b) a psychology of faith, or, since faith on its human side affects conduct as well as personality, the efficacy of faith.

A. *The Theology of Faith.*

The theology of faith may be summarized under the following propositions: *First,* God, the ultimate subject of knowledge, is the author and giver of faith; *Secondly,* God, the Son, acting in a saving revelation culminating in His incarnation for our redemption, graciously condescended to make Himself the object of faith. *Thirdly,* God, the Holy Ghost, has accommodated the Divine revelation to human thoughts and words in His work of inspiration; and efficaciously calls us to a saving faith by regenerating our hearts and enlightening our minds to receive the saving revelation recorded in His inspired Word.

To state the matter more simply, faith is the gift of God; faith is receiving and resting upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation; faith is the work of the Holy Spirit, engrafting us into Christ.

First, God, the ultimate subject, is the author and giver of faith.

According to the Bible, faith is the work of God, indeed the whole of salvation, including faith, is the gift of God (Eph. 2: 8). Paul rejoiced that the faith of the Corinthians stood not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (I Cor. 2: 4-5). God wrought faith in them, just as in Thessalonica the Apostle's gospel also came in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance (I Thess. 1: 5).

Jesus says that flesh and blood does not reveal unto us a saving knowledge of the Christ, the Son of the living God; but that only the Father in heaven makes this gracious revelation (Matt. 16: 17; 11: 25).

This Biblical teaching that faith is God's work and gift is the doctrine of the Reformed Faith. Calvin declares, "that only is saving faith which the Holy Spirit works in us." The Shorter Catechism teaches that God the Holy Ghost works faith in us and thereby unites us to Christ in our effectual calling. Kuyper assures us that the doctrine of election just means that God, standing in unapproachable majesty above us, opens the councils of His peace to whom He will by the Holy Spirit.

No matter how serious the differences which distinguish the representatives of the newest theology from each other and often from the historic Reformed positions, there is no denying that much of the more recent theology, in distinction from American "liberalism," does recognize the Divine initiative in faith. Lamont, recent Moderator of the Church of Scotland, writes, "For our knowledge of God we are inexorably cast upon the

initiative of God Himself. . . . It is of the very essence of Christianity that God has taken the initiative and done for us what our own reason, God-given faculty though it is, could never do."[20] George W. Richards concludes that men "must be known by God before they can know Him, they must be laid hold on by God before they can lay hold on Him."[21] Karl Adam of Tubingen says, "Belief in Christ in its becoming and being is an act of God, a kiss from His freely bestowed love, it is His creative word to us."[22] Barth asserts, "We cannot give ourselves faith." John 3:5 shows that the possibility of believing requires nothing less than a new birth and the power which achieves it in us cannot be anything less than God's power. "Faith has been gifted to him (man) by the Word." "Man acts by believing, but the fact that he believes by acting is God's act. Man is the subject of faith. It is not God but man who believes. But the very fact of a man thus being subject in faith is bracketed as the predicate of the subject, God, bracketed exactly as the Creator embraces His creature, the merciful God sinful man, i.e. so that there is no departure from man's being a subject, and this very thing, the Ego of man as such, is still only derivable from the Thou of the Subject, God."[23]

Indeed, this position is so general that Erich Schaeder of Breslau declares that with some difference of emphasis the theology of the present insists that, "The

20. Lamont, D., ibid, pp. 203, 219.
21. Richards in American Philosophics of Religion, p. 213.
22. Adam, The Son of God, pp. 40, 37, 48.
23. Barth, K., Credo, p. 136; The Doctrine of the Word of God, pp. 200 280, 281.

living God is never, *in principle*, the Object for men. Every realism which oversteps these bounds is an inversion and a perversion. *In principle* God is Subject over against us, not some given object, not a given substance or thing, but a Person. We are God's Objects; He is not Object for us. That other conception is an exaltation of ourselves above God which is contrary to reality and destructive of His honor. And the doctrine of the Enlightenment, which makes God an object for human investigation, is nothing else. . . . To be sure, while God treats us as Objects in the efficacy of the trusting faith that draws us to Himself, while He sovereignly apprehends us, He elevates us—just in the form of personal active faith—to a conscious willing Subject relation toward Himself. We relate ourselves to Him, He becomes for us the Object of a special peculiar relationship called faith. But in this form of the Object-Subject-relationship God always remains just as God, the real Subject. For we believe on Him as He moves and determines to believe and in believing. We believe on Him and His Christ as He rules us in faith. It belongs to the principles of a theocentric theology which is directed irremovably toward God, that always to some extent and in the ultimate analysis it holds in view the quality of God's Lordship. And this declares, at once, that God is standing, in principle, outside the category of the objective."[24] That is, God is still, in principle, Subject when He is the Object of faith; because God works faith in whom He will and faith does not place

24. Schaeder, E., Theozentrische Theologia, II: 3-4, 2 Auflage.

itself above its object in the observer-attitude. Rather, the believer stands in trusting dependence upon his only Saviour, in grateful obedience 'neath his blessed Lord. Faith is that precise attitude which ascribes all the glory to God, our Saviour. Abraham believed, giving glory to God (Rom. 4: 20).

In one of his last books, J. Gresham Machen pointed out that God is active; He is not to be studied like a passive object.[25] In scientific observation things are passive objects for our control and manipulation. We take the first step. But in dealing with a personal life that life is not passive. All spiritual life is by its very nature a hidden life which can only be known as it reveals itself, or rather himself. The I-Thou relationship is different from the I-It relation. "Who among men knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of the man which is in Him? Even so, the things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:11).

Moreover, God is the absolute and infinite person. Even though we might conceivably obtain some knowledge of our fellows by observation, or even if behaviourism were true, it would not follow that we could similarly know God. Every biographer sets himself above the character he is depicting. Man cannot place himself above his Maker. Nay, man does not even stand alongside of God. Heim characterizes faith as "a standing before God," that is, a standing beneath God, realizing that we are being investigated by Him. The I-My World attitude is necessarily very different from

25. Machen, J. G., Christianity in the Modern World.

the I-Absolute attitude. God eternally exists as the Omnipresent Thou. He was before He created any creature capable of knowing Him. We are the temporal creatures of His hand; and in knowledge, as in being and in salvation, God is and will ever be the Lord. "The ground of our knowledge is in the freedom and sovereignty of God."[26] In the most gracious manifestations and pleadings of His love do not forget that God is still the Lord. Except we know God as Lord we do not know the living and true God.

Then sin has blinded the eyes of our understanding and radically separated man from his Maker.[27] Thus we can only come back to Him in the fellowship of blessed trust in case He take the initiative and of His sovereign grace restore us to Himself. There is only one fountain of grace; only one source of goodness; that is God. Or, to return to Lamont, "Christian revelation, including the faith which answers to it, is the bridge across the gulf between God and man and God alone has built it." The Apostle insists that we have come to know God, or rather to be known by God (Gal. 4: 9); that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this inscription, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His'" (II Tim. 2: 18). Our saving knowledge of God can only be an acknowledgment (Col. 2:2) of His knowing of us; a confession that he has graciously revealed Himself to us. God knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows us through and through; and has called us not to a complete, but to a saving knowledge

26. Barth, Karl, Dogmatik, I: 288-290.
27. Vos, G., Biblical Theology.

to Himself, to a present decision, to a living faith. Even as we love Him because He first loved us (First John); so also we know Him because He first knew us (John 10: 14; 15: 16). We need a return to that great hymn:

"O gift of gifts! O grace of faith!
My God, how can it be
That Thou who hast discerning love,
Shouldst give that gift to me?

How many hearts Thou mightest have had
More innocent than mine,
How many souls more worthy far
Of that sweet touch of Thine!

Ah, grace into unlikeliest hearts
It is Thy boast to come
The glory of Thy light to find
In darkest spots a home."

Secondly: In His Saving Revelation God, the Son, has Graciously Made Himself the Object of Faith.

God hath made a saving revelation of Himself in a historical process culminating in His own Incarnation. The Creator assumed the being or nature of a creature and entered[28] upon the plane of the historical, the analogical. The Lord of all made Himself the servant of all; the ultimate Subject of all knowledge of His own will condescended to become also the Object for our faith. In His humiliation God accommodated Himself to our limitations and weaknesses. Thus "Chris-

28. Cf. Barth, Credo, p. 46, "Here the Creator Himself has become the creature and therefore objective reality."

tian faith is directed to God as He is revealed to us in Jesus Christ."[29] Lamont shows from Jesus' dealings with the centurion that in our Lord's own teaching the essence of faith is the religious recognition of Himself (Luke 7:9). Gogarten affirms that only as I believe in Jesus Christ do I believe in God, the Creator; for only in Christ is God gracious to me, fulfilling for me His own requirements, and giving Himself in all that He is and has to me.[30] Our Lord certifies that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him (John 14: 6). He is the Mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2: 5). The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines for us in the face of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 4:6). Calvin writes, "Faith may find in Christ a solid ground of salvation," and the Apostle excludes any additional basis, "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3: 11). In the time-honored words of the Shorter Catechism, faith is receiving and resting upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the Gospel.

Faith rests upon Jesus Christ; faith anchors in Him. Faith keeps close to His expiatory Cross. Faith is accepting Christ, throwing oneself upon Christ. It is the entrusting of oneself to Christ, the solid confidence of the heart which commits the soul to the Lord Jesus for time and eternity. All the eyes of faith are fixed upon the Lord Jesus, the Lamb for sinners slain. And the strength of faith is neither in the idea of faith nor in the amount of faith; but in Jesus Christ, the Alpha and

29. Lamont, ibid.
30. Gogarten, F., Ich Glaube an den Dreieinigen Gott, p. 205.

the Omega of faith (Heb. 12: 2). If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, faith in Christ, it suffices, He suffices. Luther says "even weak faith does it." For "faith in Jesus is not the measure, but the token of your inheritance." "It is not thy hold on Christ that saves thee—it is Christ; it is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee—it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that be the instrument—it is Christ's blood and merit."[31] The most beautiful picture of faith I have found is in the tenth chapter of Mark, the sixteenth verse. Jesus takes the babes in the crook of His arm and lays His hand upon them and blesses them. Faith is resting in those arms of Jesus which brought us up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay and placed our feet upon the Rock of His redeeming Cross. Faith cries:

"Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

Faith points as steadily to Jesus as the compass needle points to the North. Faith ever prays:

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

* * * * *

"My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour Divine!

31. Spurgeon.

Now hear me while I pray:
Take all my guilt away;
Oh, let me from this day
Be wholly Thine."

This whole-hearted committal of ourselves, our temporal interest and our eternal salvation to Jesus means that we receive as our Saviour one great enough to bear the tremendous issues committed to Him. I not only need a whole world for my parish; a whole church for my fellowship; a whole Bible for my staff; but, first of all, a whole Christ for my salvation. Only an infinite Saviour can be an all-sufficient Saviour. Let us be sure that the ground of our faith is the complete Christ. May we treasure and practice His words. The Sermon on the Mount is truly one of the mountain peaks of Scripture. But just as truly we need every one of the miracles which manifest His Divine power and glory. Jesus is God our Saviour, the Second person of the Holy Trinity, who for us men and for our salvation became also man and that in a miraculous way. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary and born of her yet without sin. As Brother Bryan of Birmingham expresses it, "Jesus Christ is the only person who ever lived before He was born." The eternal Son of God was born a man that He might die for men; thereafter He rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us and whence also He shall

come to judge the quick and the dead. He who was God, the Creator, became also man, the creature, that He might be the Mediator.

It may be possible to walk across the roaring Niagara on a tight rope; but when I cross that mighty cataract I want a solid structure of steel and concrete under me. And as I climb the ladder of faith leading up to the gates of God, I rejoice that God has not given me a mere tight rope, a Saviour who may only be a mere man, who may not have done mighty miracles, whose corpse some one may have stolen and left to decay under a Syrian sky.[32] No! Thank God for His assurance that standing between my sinful soul and the lurid flames of Hell there is that Saviour who is God and man, Jehovah-Jesus, who entered human life by a miraculous conception and truly conquered death by the revivification of His own body, the supernatural Jesus now exalted to God's right-hand, a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and the remission of sins.

'Tis Christ, and particularly Christ in His cross, that we receive for salvation.

"At the Cross, at the Cross
Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away—
It was there by faith
I received my sight;
And now I am happy all the day."

32. Bacon, B. W., The Story of Jesus Christ.

"My hope is build on nothing less,
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

Brunner says that the whole struggle of the Reformation was simply the struggle for the right interpretation of the Cross; for he who understands the Cross aright understands the Bible, and understands Jesus Christ.[33] Luther declares, "Therefore this text—He bore our sins—must be understood particularly thoroughly, as the foundation upon which stands the whole of the New Testament or the Gospel, as that which alone distinguishes us and our religion from all other religions. For Christians alone believe this text. Therefore, whosoever believes this article of faith is secure against all errors, and God the Holy Ghost is necessarily for him."

It is only when we look in faith to the Cross that the awful separation between the holy God and His sinful creatures is bridged. Sin caused us to hide from God; sin called forth His righteous indignation upon us. At the Cross we see ourselves in all our vileness. In the Cross God is manifest both in His holy hatred of sin and in the infinite tenderness of His love. The holy God can no more fail to punish sin than He can lie. The Cross is the vials of holy wrath poured upon One who was made sin and a curse; who, as Luther says, assumed our things that He might give us His. But the Cross is also love, love to the uttermost, God's love speaking peace and pardon by agony and death. My friends, the Cross is not a compromise with sin, it is an awful, a holy, a gracious substitution; it is not the can-

33. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 435.

cellation of our debts, it is their satisfaction; it is not the mere wiping off of the slate; it is the wiping out of our guilt by blood, agony and death. In my place condemned He stood; bought my pardon with His blood. Here is the happy exchange of which the Reformer loved to speak. He assumed our penalty, and confers upon us His righteousness. Or as Augustine wrote:

"From us death to Him; from Him salvation to us;
From us contumelies to Him; from Him honors to us."

In the days when the hand of God mightily lifted the Protestant standard, Calvin could truly say that the Romanists were erecting crosses of wood and stone and gold and silver, because they had resigned to these crucifixes the task of preaching the Gospel, "of setting forth Christ evidently crucified before our eyes" (Institutes, I:xi:vii). But today, not without occasion, the Romanists are charging that in many parts of America Protestants have taken the Cross not only from the tops of the churches, but as well from the heart of their preaching. As we work and pray for a great revival to quicken the pulse of American Protestantism, let us remember that a revival can only start at the foot of the Cross. Christian faith is anchored at Golgotha, where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all. A revival will never come from neglecting or from trampling under foot the blood of the covenant. It will come only when the Church is again willing to be a mere index finger pointing to the Crucified, a John the Baptist voice crying, "Behold the Lamb of God that

taketh away the sin of the world." Then will the exalted Christ once again fulfil His plighted Word: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself."

Thirdly: In inspiration God, the Holy Spirit, has accommodated revelation to human apprehension; and in regeneration illumines sinners to receive this revelation.

God not only graciously condescends to reveal Himself to men by the Second Person of the Godhead becoming incarnate; He also put that revelation in a dependable record clear enough for the wayfaring man not to misunderstand. The Third Person of the Trinity, God, the Holy Spirit, carried out the work of inspiration. He accommodated the revelation of God to human thoughts and human words so that men might know what they needed to know in order to be saved. Thus the Bible becomes the inspired prism or spectacles through which we are to look in order to see God. The Word is the lamp unto our feet and the light for our pathway (Ps. 119).

Barth is right in insisting on the majesty of the transcendent God who can only be known as He wills to reveal Himself, and must be known through His revelation. But Barth has not sufficiently realized the accommodation of God or the perspicuity of the inspired record of this revelation.[34] God is in heaven, we are on earth (Ecc. 5:2); but God's Word, the Word of the gospel which we preach, is nigh us, in our mouths and in our hearts (Rom. 10:8).

34. Schilder, K., Zur Begriffsgeschichte des "Parodoxon".

God made exceeding great and precious promises to Abraham and the patriarch apprehended and accepted these promises. Faith is accepting the Word of God as true. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Rom. 10: 17); and believers are "born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible through the Word of God which liveth and abideth" (I Peter 1:23). In his *Liberty of a Christian Man* Luther assures us that by believing the promises of God we receive the blessings promised. Calvin writes that "faith has a perpetual relation to the Word, and can no more be separated from it, than the rays from the sun whence they proceed." "The same Divine word is the foundation by which faith is sustained and supported, and from which it cannot be moved without an immediate downfall. Take away the Word and there will be no faith left." Indeed, so close is the connection between the Word and faith in the mind of the Genevan that he can say "faith is used metonymically for the word."[35] In a similar key the first Moderator of the Southern Presbyterian Church wrote, "Faith clings to the testimony of the divine word";[36] and the 1936 Moderator of the Church of Scotland rightly says that God inspires faith through His Word and that "the man of faith waits upon the Word of God."[37] God lays His saving hand upon the hearts of men by His Word and by His Spirit (Is. 59: 21); therefore, there can be no revival of faith except through a revival of Bible

35. The Institutes.
36. Palmer, B. M., ibid, p. 140.
37. Lamont, D., ibid, pp. 255, 278, 279.

preaching, Bible reading, Bible believing, Bible obeying. "The same Spirit that prompted the faith of the Apostles can evoke a like faith from us when we give ourselves to the hearing of their testimony."[37] This testimony of God is the true basis of faith.[38]

In the Bible we have "a Word of God in which God speaks directly to each of our souls."[39] Hence, if you would know God, apply yourself to the Bible. God hath given here everything necessary for His own glory, for the salvation of the soul, for faith and for life. You will not gain a true knowledge of God by reading the books of mystical experiences; by following the vagaries of idealistic philosophy; by sitting with vacant minds in the hours of the morning, waiting for some stimulus to enter your empty head; by spinning extravagant paradoxes; or by give and take with the Confucian, the liberal Jew, the Buddhist, or the Christian Scientist in the mistaken idea of attaining some truth more vital and inclusive than the Christian Scriptures which you call "the New Testament of every existing faith."[40] We only pray "Hallowed be Thy Name" in its true meaning when we reverently accept that revelation which He has made of His Name in the Bible as complete, final, true. Only then are our souls lifted with the vision of a God who does not give His glory to another, and our hearts inflamed with gratitude for the fatherly love we are receiving from this great God.

Accordingly, the Reformers insist that the preaching

38. So Adolphe Monod, quoted with approval by Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 70.
39. Warfield, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 71.
40. Re-thinking Missions, p. 44.

of the pure Word of God is the first and essential characteristic of the visible Church. Luther testifies:

"The Word brings Christ to the folk and makes Him known in their hearts." "The Christian community should never come together except where God's every Word be preached and prayer made. . . . Where God's Word is not preached 'tis better people neither sing, nor read, nor come together. . . . 'Tis better to leave all out, save the Word. And there is naught better to pursue than the Word. For the whole Scripture sheweth that that same should be compulsory among Christians, and Christ also saith Himself (Luke 10: 42) 'one thing is needful.' That Mary should sit at Christ's feet and hear his Word daily is the best part to choose, and is never taken away. It is an eternal saying that all else must pass away, however much there is for Martha to do." "This is to bless: to preach and to teach the Word of the Gospel, to confess Christ, and to propagate the knowledge of Him among others."

Melanchthon adds, "For the greatest, holiest, most needful, highest service of God, which God hath demanded in the first and second command as the greatest, is to preach God's Word."[41]

Calvin in the fourth book of *The Institutes* and Knox in the *First Buik of Discipline* make the preaching of the Word the first mark of the visible church. The former writes: "The Church can only be edified by the preaching of this Word."

The *Theses* of Bern, drafted by Haller and Zwingli, begin, "The Holy Catholic Church, of which Christ is

the only head, is born of the Word of God, abides therein, and does not hear the voice of a stranger."

While the Lutherans have magnified the sacraments more than have the Reformed, Hermann Bezzel presents the Lutheran doctrine thus:

"The Word has been the first and will remain the first. It does not say, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my sacraments shall not pass away; but it says, But my words shall not pass away . . . The Word is the primary thing. The Word was before sacrament and exists without sacrament, and will exist hereafter."[41]

If we would re-establish faith, our first obligation is to heed the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: PREACH THE WORD.

The fact that God uses the revelation which took place once for all in a present action taking place today gives the Word of God rather than the sacrament, a personal encounter rather than a material connection, the place of emphasis as the center of the Church's life and worship.[42] "Christ is, so to speak, present in the faith itself."* However, we understand and designate this current action of God as *present application,* not as *future revelation.* And as Spurgeon reminds us, "Application is the work of God alone." God, the Holy Spirit, has prepared His own instrument for the building and maintaining of faith. "The word is the instrument, by which the Lord dispenses to believers the illumination of His Spirit."[43] The Galatian Christians received the

41. Cited by Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 79.
42. Cf. Barth, ibid, pp. 135, 140, 77. *Luther.
43. Calvin, The Institutes.

Spirit by the hearing of faith, that is, by the hearing of the Word of God which demands faith (Gal. 3: 2).

The One who inspired the Word illumines both our sin-darkened heart and the Word, so that "in His light we see light" (Ps. 36: 9). The Holy Ghost shines in our hearts that we may apprehend the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Only by being in God can we know God. Thus "the actualizing power of faith comes alone through the agency of the Holy Spirit." *Credo Deo Deum.* Or, "where Christ sat not at the right hand of God, nor daily poured forth His Spirit, the Christian faith could not exist. . . . Where the outpouring of the Holy Ghost kept not continual guard, the devil would not let a single man abide by the Easter preaching and by faith in Christ!"[44]

Two things are necessary for sight, light and a seeing eye. Every ray of the Divine glory in its merciful ministry of redemption shines from the face of Jesus Christ. But sin has so darkened our spiritual discernment that even the Word of the Cross is foolishness to us until our minds are enlightened, our stony hearts are melted, and our craven wills are renewed by the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit. Just because the Spirit accompanies the preaching of the Gospel, effectually working faith in the hearts of hearers (II Cor. 3:3; I Cor. 2:4-5; 12:3; I Thess. 1:5; Eph. 2:8), He is designated "the Spirit of faith" (II Cor. 4:13). Faith is revealed to our minds and confirmed to our

44. Luther.

hearts by the Holy Spirit. Our faith does not rest on the shifting opinion of men; it is neither a bare figment of our imagination, nor a mere leap of our weak and wicked wills to God; nor yet the acceptance of God primarily on the testimony of the Church. Faith is a confidence graven on our hearts by the finger of the living God. "That alone is true faith which the Spirit of God seals in our hearts."[45] As the illumination of the Holy Spirit, faith is a knowledge of God rooted in the depths of the heart.

Thus diametrically contradicting humanistic thought, the New Testament denies that faith is a conjecture, or an uncertainty and expressly commends it as an assurance. Abraham did not doubt the promises of God in unbelief, but waxed strong in faith . . . being fully assured that what He had promised He is able also to do (Rom. 4: 20-21). To ask in faith means a prayer "wholly free from doubt"[46] (James 1:6; cf. I Tim. 2:8). "Faith is an assurance of things hoped for, a certainty of things not seen" (Heb. 11: 6). Faith produces full assurance (Heb. 10: 22; cf. I Thess. 1: 5).

Happily, this New Testament doctrine has had and does have advocates. At the time of the Reformation Patrick Hamilton declared, "Faith is a certainty," and Calvin defined faith as "a certain and steadfast knowledge." With obvious reference to John's *a fortiore* "if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater"; Thornwell writes, "No authority can be higher than the direct testimony of God, and no cer-

45. Institutes, I:vii:v.
46. Thayer, Lexicon of the New Testament.

tainty can be greater than that imparted by the Spirit shining on the Word." B. M. Palmer found in Col. 2:2 a fourfold intensification of language used to express the entire certainty of Christianity, and hence described faith as "certitude of the truth in its reality and its actual appropriation to practical ends."[47] P. T. Forsyth declares, "Faith is Christian certainty."[48] Dean Doumergue reminds us, "If it be a horrible sacrilege to suspect any revelation coming from Him either of deceit or of uncertainty, or of ambiguity, then must we not affirm the certitude of that which He has revealed?" Schaeder reasons that since a living faith is wrought by the presence of the living God and rests on His unchanging grace, it is a certainty of God and of His salvation.[49] And the last Moderator of the Church of Scotland takes up the refrain, asserting that "He who recognizes a voice in his own soul as an echo . . . of that voice which rings from the New Testament, the absolutely authoritative Word of God, has the highest and most joyous certainty that a man can have on earth."[50]

B. *The Efficacy of Faith.*

Archimedes, the Greek mathematician, declared that if he only had a place on which to stand, a fulcrum on which to rest his lever, he could move the world.

Just because faith has its fulcrum in the Beyond, its leverage in the Lord, its anchorage in the Almighty, it is "the victory that overcomes the world" (I John

47. Palmer, B. M., The Threefold Fellowship and the Threefold Assurance, pp. 97, 124.
48. Forsyth, The Cruciality of the Cross, H. & S., p. 32.
49. Schaeder, ibid, pp. 258-9.
50. Lamont, D., Christ and the World of Thought, p. 240.

5: 4). By her sure foundation in the unchanging God, faith becomes "an energy of the whole soul," a force mighty enough to move mountains. The very fact of faith convinces us that God is working in us and encourages us to work out His good pleasure. Nay, more, faith is the evidence that God has apprehended us and the earnest of His power to work in and through us. Faith itself is the first installment of God's grace objectively given to mightily multiply our puny powers. Faith puts us in God's hands, places us at His disposal. Apart from faith man is only as the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven. By faith he becomes an instrument in the hand of the Almighty, a recipient and a channel of grace. Thus, faith multiplies a man's impact upon life a hundredfold.

Call the roll of the heroes of faith and you read the list of the men of action, of accomplishment. In presenting a portrait of Stonewall Jackson to the Capital Club in Raleigh, N. C., Woodrow Wilson said, "I do not understand how any man can approach the discharge of the duties of life without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."[51] Luther well said, "Your faith is not a dream and a fancy, but it is life and deed." Christianity, Judaism, and Mohammedanism all look back to one who was a pilgrim and a sojourner with no earthly city to call his own—to Abraham, the man of faith. The mighty tread of Martin Luther, a miner's son, who took God at His Word, shook to the very foundations the

51. Daniel, J., Life of Woodrow Wilson, p. 258.

ruling powers of Christendom, papacy, empire, scholastic learning. Geneva became the West Point of Protestantism when Calvin expounded the Scriptures with a logic impregnated by the passion of conviction. Men complained of the first century believers that they had turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). The world has been moved, the world will be moved and molded by the men of faith.

"Faith is like the God to whom it refers." And "that which is wrought and accomplished of faith by God or by the Spirit of God signifies that faith is something totalitarian or absolute."[52] Thornwell describes faith as an intuition awakened by the Holy Spirit. This heavenly vision diffuses itself through every power of the soul, undergirding and intensifying every function of personality, rectifying and enlightening the reason, purifying the heart, sanctifying the imagination, renewing the will. Or as Palmer expressed it in terms of an older psychology: "The principle of holiness breaks the power of reigning sin and directs anew the faculties of the soul. The mind perceives truth under the new light which is shed upon it; the conscience renders its judgment under a new code which it accepts; the heart turns to a new love which attracts it, and the will, polarized afresh, impels in another course than before."

On its intellectual side Christian belief is not antirational; rather, in this aspect "faith is only reason enlightened and rectified by grace."[53] Apart from grace

52. Schaeder, E., Theozentrische Theologie, II: 256-257.
53. Thornwell, I: 52. Cf. Berdyaev, "Faith does not abandon reason, it carries reason with it; but reason is transformed and illuminated." Dickie, E. P., Religion in Life, Winter, 1936.

reason is so darkened by sin that it can no more appreciate redemptive truth than one who is color-blind can appreciate the manifold hues of autumn, or one who refuses to look at a stained glass window except from without the cathedral can enjoy its rich tints and hallowed artistry. Rectified by grace, reason discovers in the Word a temple of holiness that could have only God for its architect, beholds a beacon of truth which shines in its own light and illumines all about it, finds a power for life which can only be the energy of the Almighty. Faith is, thus, a conviction produced by evidence.[54] In other words, the *evidence* that the Scriptures are the Word of God is in the Scriptures themselves. The *capacity* to discern this evidence is given by the Holy Spirit. Faith directs the mind to God as the unifying center and source of all activities. There is one God but a diversity of workings (I Cor. 12: 4-6). Faith teaches us that complete coherence is in God, the absolute reason; and hence, that it is more reasonable for us to walk by faith, than to fancy we can attain an absolute coherence with our finite and relative minds. By placing our trust in God, faith enables us to concentrate without fear upon the present duty. Securing our hearts in One who feeds the tiny birds and clothes even the lilies, faith makes it reasonable for a believer to share his meager store with others in need. We can care for others, for He careth for us. The logic of faith reasons that if we fear God we have no one else to fear, or, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom.

54. Smythe, in Southern Presbyterian Review, 1848.

8: 31). He maketh all things to work together for good to those who love Him.

Again, "faith worketh by love" (Gal. 5: 6). "A believing act is essentially a loving act. It is a giving of personal confidence. It implies the outgo of the self toward another."[55] Faith wrought such a devotion to the Lord in the heart of Abraham that he became known as the friend of God. Christian faith is love for and loyalty to Jesus Christ. When our Lord took our punishment and offered Himself an expiatory sacrifice to God, He at the same time flung Himself at love, that great dynamo of human action. There is an incentive in His love for us. "We love, because He first loved us" (I John 4: 19). The grace of God floods our hearts with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Like a mighty ocean breaking all around us, the floodtide of His love constraineth our love. Revealing to our wondering eyes the love that brought Christ to die for sinners, the Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Rom. 5: 5). The work of the Spirit in our hearts, the love of the Father in giving His only-begotten and the love of Christ for us are the dynamics of faith. And since "God is greater than our hearts" (I John 3: 20), Christian faith is something more than a mere philosophy of loyalty. It is loyalty to the One altogether lovely, engendered by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the living presence of Him who loveth us. Or as Paul expresses it, "Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of

55. A. B. D. Alexander.

the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me." Love for Christ expresses itself particularly in love for the brotherhood, for,

> *"The Church our blest Redeemer saved*
> *With His own precious blood."*

Likewise it calls for love for the lost for whom Christ died. It binds the Great Commission upon our hearts, causing us to realize that we are debtors to those who have never heard the message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

One of the most beautiful pictures of the faith that worketh by love is found in the record of a martyrdom in Carthage, March 7, 203. The Roman authorities surprised and arrested a communicant class composed of half a dozen catechumens preparing for Church membership. Notable in the group were Perpetua, a noble Roman matron and mother, and Felicitas, a slave who became a mother before her martyrdom. The lady was appealed to by her father with flatteries, threats, entreaties for his sake and for the sake of the baby on her breast to deny her Lord. She replied that as truly as one could not call a table other than a table, a lamp other than a lamp, so no one could call her anything other than a Christian. When they were taken into the arena a wild cow tossed both mothers to the dirt. Lifting herself, Perpetua hastily pinned together her torn garments and arranged her disheveled hair. Unbound locks were a sign of mourning and this was to be her day of triumph, to-day she was to be the bride of Christ.

Then, seeing that her companion was unable to rise, the Roman lady reached down to lift the slave mother, and the arena saw faith working by love, a sisterhood that knew no boundaries manifested in Christian martyrdom.

Rooted in the highest reason, working by love, the mightiest dynamic of the heart, the believing soul has a certain conviction on which it acts, a principle and a power producing "new movements and works in men." Acting upon and through the will, the spiritual principle of saving faith secures an actual appropriation of the Saviour and all His benefits for the soul. Faith sees the purpose of God moving through the ages, the Kingdom of God actualizing itself in life and undertakes the "good works which God hath before ordained that one should walk in." Faith bows our wills to God's will and presents our bodies living sacrifices in His service. Faith moved the wills and bodies of the patriarchs and the apostles to go out, not knowing whither they went. By faith Moses made life's great choice. "The mighty dynamic of faith lifted and drove him to a complete surrender of his will in faithful and fearless obedience."[56] By refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter this Hebrew became known as "Moses the man of God." Acting upon the will, faith shows itself by its fruits. Rooted in God, it fruits in a life of service. By faith we "worship God in the Church and serve Him in the world." "The proof of faith consists in the proclamation of faith."[57] Amid confusion, compromise

56. Clark, Dr. Melton, in Daily Manna, 1937.
57. Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 276.

and concession, faith, ever and anon, lifts the banner of testimony. "The faith of David made him proclaim the fidelity and goodness of God. The faith of Paul made him, despite all the suffering it brought upon him, proclaim the gospel with full assurance of its truth and of his own participation in its benefits."[58] In the midst of the turmoil of "Nicodemites," Anabaptists, mystics and German interims, the faith of Calvin held aloft the standard of God's Word, as the sole and sufficient rule for His people. "Having the same Spirit of faith, according as it is written, 'I have believed, therefore have I spoken,' we also believe, therefore we speak" (II Cor. 4:13). Faith recognizes, with Calvin, that "the chief good consists in the practice of righteousness in obedience to the commands of God; and that the ultimate end of a happy life is to be beloved by Him."

Faith is the one thing needful for this life and for that which is to come. By faith alone Abraham forsook home, city and family and went out, not knowing whither he went. The one abiding possession of these nomad patriarchs was their faith. And the Epistle to the Hebrews is written to teach the early Jewish believers that faith, the one great thing they need, will abide when temple, city and nation have perished. They have Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega of faith, what else matters?

On one occasion Spurgeon entered his pulpit directly from visits to several of his members who were on their death beds, and declared that the manifestation

58. Hodge, Charles, An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, H. & S., p. 97.

of the reality of their faith had nerved him to preach like a lion. While pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Dr. John S. Foster was called one Sunday morning to the bedside of Mr. W. D. Bailey, his senior elder, who was to be operated on immediately. The pastor repeated the twenty-third Psalm and offered a prayer. The elder declared, "I want to live. I hope it is God's will. But I am in His hands and what He does will be best. I should like to have you stay with me during this operation, but you have your morning service. Go and tell the people of a Saviour who can stay and strengthen us in every need." And if you will pardon a personal word, two years ago I stood beside another Presbyterian elder, my father, when the doctor told him that they would have to take off his right leg in an effort to prolong his life, which was fast being snuffed out by attacks of *angina pectoris*. When the doctor stepped out we repeated together the twenty-third psalm. As we did so the voice of the minister shook, but the voice of the elder never quavered. His faith was riveted in the living God by His Holy Word. The faith which he loved to sing in life sustained him in death:

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake."

As I speak of the faith of my father some of you gathered here are thinking of the last testimony of one who was your father in the faith, J. Gresham Machen. He forsook position, prestige, comforts, hallowed halls and associations under the impulse of mighty convictions. He gave up everything for his faith; but having faith, he had everything needful for this life and for that which is to come, for faith is the link that unites one to the unchanging God. In his last words, Machen, being dead, yet speaketh of the preciousness of faith:

> *"Isn't our faith glorious!*
> *It is sufficient to the very end."*

One of my prized possessions is a Greek Testament which was always in the hand, or at the side of William M. McPheeters during his latter years and final sickness. As he faced man's last great enemy and felt the frail bark of his earthly life going to pieces, this man of God was continually fortifying his soul with the Word which was immediately inspired of God. When I last saw that tiny frame which was the Gibraltar of Southern Presbyterian loyalty to the Word, lying beside him on the bed were this Testament and the current copy of a popular religious weekly. Referring to the latter, he remarked, 'Why will our ministers try to feed immortal souls on such chaff!' Turning to the former, he declared he had been impressed anew with the determination of the Apostles to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6: 4). 'If we could only realize,' said the dying saint, 'the utter reasonable-

ness of doing just that—preach the Word of God and pray the Holy Spirit to bless it!' The last messages I received from this father in Israel were two. For himself he asked, 'Pray that Satan may not buffet me too hard.' To the writer he gave this admonition, 'Hold on to the sufficiency of the Word.' Consider these two final requests: is there any logical connection between the sufficiency of the Word, and the buffeting of Satan? Karl Heim has a paragraph which indicates a deep inner connection between the two thoughts: "In the struggle of death, when there is no strength in us upon which we can draw; when the powers of our soul are withered and the Accuser attacks us day and night—the Word becomes greater and more precious than ever before. We cling to the Word, as Luther told us, like a man, slipping down a cliff, clings to a rope that is thrown to him, and which alone can save him from the depth below. We cling fast to its great promises. . . . We have no other resting place. . . . Faith is nothing else than that movement which we must always make, away from ourselves and from our feelings and variable moods, to the Word."[59]

Perhaps a fortnight after my last conversation with Dr. McPheeters, he passed to his reward. Every detail of the funeral service was conducted as he had directed. There was no address, only the singing of hymns of triumph, prayers and the reading of the following passages which he had selected from the Holy Scriptures to set forth his victorious faith in the gracious God:

59. Heim, Karl, The Gospel of the Cross, pp. 107-8.

Ps. 90:1-2; Ps. 48:14; Ps. 103:8-18; Ex. 34:5-7; Isa. 40:10-11, 25-31; 42:16; John 3:16; Matt. 11:28-30; John 11:21-25; 14:1-6; II Cor. 4:16-5:8; I Cor. 15: 35-58; I Thess. 4: 13-18; Rev. 7:9-17. Of this Patriarch it may be truly penned: He kept the faith, he died in faith. And when one begins again to speak as a dying man to dying men,[60] can a better epitaph than that be written for any man? On the other hand, if a man compromise his testimony to the faith can he be sure that he will die in faith? Faith is more precious than rubies and no honor that a man can desire is worthy to be compared with her. For faith is the sign of a fellowship that death cannot sever, the evidence of a life that shall never end.

60. Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress.

III.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

The Father of All Those Who Believe

"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." —ACTS 7: 2.

"And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness."
—GEN. 15:6; ROM. 4:3, 9, 22.

"The faith of Abraham who . . . staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong through faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what he hath promised, he was able also to do." —ROM. 4:16-21.

"Only the Word of God is sufficient for our faith. That alone is true faith which the Spirit of God seals in our hearts."—CALVIN.

"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and the wise. Security, security, God of Jesus Christ." —BLAISE PASCAL.

III.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

The Father of All Those Who Believe

Jesus and Abraham.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the perfect and complete pattern for the Christian life. He left us an example that we should follow His steps; and Christ our example, second only to Christ our Saviour, is the most precious possession of a Christian's heart. Hence Jesus Christ is the highest example for faith. In His temptation He resolutely turned against the suggestions of Satan, refused to put God to the test, and chose to walk by faith rather than by sight. The Epistle to the Hebrews places in the mouth of Jesus this text, "I will put my trust in him." It behooved him to be made in all things like unto His brethren. With us He partook of flesh and blood, passing through our whole curriculum of physical limitations, temptation, obedience and death. Yea, when He tasted death for every man He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death. In His holy walk of faith our Saviour learned obedience through the things which He suffered. The highest act of faith which this planet has witnessed was Jesus' cry

through the darkness that God was still His God, even though in making His soul an offering for sin God did forsake His Beloved.

And yet the Bible does not as a rule place the emphasis upon Jesus as an example for faith; primarily, because to do so might imperil an even more important relationship which Jesus sustains to faith. For the New Testament Jesus is fundamentally the object of our faith. This is true not only in Paul and John. Even in the Synoptics Jesus warns us not to cause the little ones *who believe on Him* to stumble. (Matt. 18:6; Mark 9: 42) and commends the faith which expresses itself in a religious relationship to Himself (Luke 7:9).[1] Another reason may be that God wished an example for faith before the times were fulfilled for the coming of Jesus. At any rate, Abraham is presented as the father of the faithful, the Divinely ordained and Providentially ordered exemplar of the faith which a sinner ought to have in his Maker and Redeemer. Unless one has already made the test it will surprise him how often in Scripture the faith of Abraham is presented as the true type for every man's faith. This is true of the Pentateuch, of Joshua, of Second Chronicles, of Nehemiah, of Isaiah, of the Gospels, of Galatians and Romans, of Hebrews and James. Therefore, without either retracting or qualifying what we have written in the first paragraph of this chapter, we are true to the major emphases of Scripture when we say that Abraham is the father of the faithful, while Christ is their life;

1. Lamont, Christ and the World of Thought, p. 173.

that Abraham is the example of faith, Christ the object of faith; that Abraham is a pilgrim who walked by faith in a Saviour to come, and Christ is the Saviour upon whom the faith of every believer focuses. Thus, we are not detracting from the glory of our Lord when we study Abraham as the typical example for faith. In executing His office as our Prophet, the eternal Son and Word, has provided for us in Abraham an example of a man of like passions with ourselves and bids us compare our faith with his to ascertain whether it conforms to the God-given norm.

Abraham's Faith was Wrought by God's Revelation

The adherents of the three monotheistic faiths agree in describing Abraham as the father of the faithful and the friend of God. The very fulsomeness of this recognition of Abraham has a tendency to obscure the condition in which Abraham was when God first appeared to him. It is so easy to think of Abraham as he became, that one fails to remember Abram as he began.

However, as Paul more than hints, Abram was then an uncircumcised pagan. Joshua supplements the account thus: "Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the river, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods." The idolatrous practices of Terah are amplified in a Ras Shamra inscription which comes from the fourteenth century before Christ. This inscription describes Terah carrying with him on his migration the idols of his cult, Sin, the moon-god, and Nikkar, his consort. The findings of archæology show that Sin or Nannar, the moon-god, and

his consort, Nin-Gal (the grand lady) were the chief deities both of Haran and of Ur. Thus Terah seems to have been a priest of this cult and the name Abram, which he gave his son, may have been designed to honor the Moon-god as the exalted father. If so, we have an additional reason why God changed the Patriarch's name from Abram to Abraham.

Moreover, these Shemites were dwellers in one of the most opulent and civilized cities of the ancient world. If we avoid reading back into Abram's primitive state the condition in which the epistle to the Hebrews pictures him, a dweller in tents with no abiding city, these evidences of his faith on which the inspired writer dwells become all the more significant to us. The story which the excavations are bringing to light is that Ur was a city with a millennium of history when Terah left it; a royal city of three great dynasties, whose glory was still evident in the regal tombs; a city with commerce, navigation, artisans of the first rank, with literature, mathematics, astronomy and medicine; a city of prosperity, luxury and religion. The religion and the medical art of the court are shown in the royal tombs, which indicate that members of the king's court took some sleeping potion and were buried with the dead monarch to await him in the next world. Students of archaeology are tentatively dating the exodus of Terah at about the time of destruction of Ur by Sin-Muballit, king of Babylon, and predecessor of Hammurabi.[2] It

2. Ur en Chaldee, Patrie D'Abraham, by Andre Parrot, Directeur des fouilles de la mission francaise en Mesopotamie, Evangelical Quarterly, 6:1.

is unwise to build too definitely on a tentative dating. But one is tempted to wonder whether the shadow of impending destruction hastened the departure of Terah, or whether, like Aeneas of Troy, he gathered up his family and his gods and fled from the smoking city which Sin-Muballit had just put to the sword.

We have dwelt on this paternal home of Abraham in order to make clear that his faith was produced neither by the sublimity of his ideals nor by the purity of his life. The God of heaven and earth, who is Most High above the moon which Abram worshiped and the stars which he counted, appeared to Abraham while he was a pagan and an idolater. "The God of glory appeared unto our father, Abraham, when he dwelt in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran" (Acts 7: 2). God took the initiative and revealed Himself to this devotee of a false religion living in a city of pagan art and magnificence. Abram is the man with whom God began again; not the man who of himself made a new venture and found a new religion. God disclosed himself to Abram, Abram did not discover God with the dialectics of his mind, or the sincerity of his piety.

A careful reading of the third chapter of Galatians indicates that the blessed revelation of God included a gracious work of the Holy Spirit in Abraham's heart. The Gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham so that he enjoyed by way of anticipation its wondrous blessedness. In accord with that Gospel Christ became a curse for us to redeem us from the curse of the law that we might receive the blessing of which Abraham

received a foretaste, namely, the promise of the Spirit. That is, accompanying the objective manifestation of God, "the promise of the Spirit" wrought in the father of the faithful "the blessing of Abraham." Abraham's faith was wrought by God's revelation to him and in him.

Abraham did not glory before God as though he were justified of his own goodness, spirituality or law-keeping. Nay, he believed giving glory to God. He was justified by faith that it might be according to grace (Rom. 4:2, 16, 20. Indeed, Abraham is Paul's classical example of the principle that a man is justified by faith, not by works. The case of Abraham calls forth the Apostle's sharpest distinction between "the man who worketh" and "the man who worketh not" but believeth, a distinction so sharp that it reminds one of the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. And Abraham is not like the Pharisee, but like the publican; Abraham is the man who worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). The contrast between the two may be indicated by a series of antitheses. The man that worketh expecteth to be justified by good works; the man that worketh not trusteth to be justified by faith. The man that worketh thinketh that God is indebted to him; the man that worketh not knoweth that he is indebted to God. The man that worketh claimeth salvation as a matter of just desert; the man that worketh not understandeth that salvation is all of grace. The man that worketh holdeth that man earns justification; the man that worketh not realizeth that God gives

justification. The man that worketh boasteth of his goodness and thanketh God that he is not as other men are; the man that worketh not casteth himself, as a hopeless, hell-deserving sinner, upon Him that justifieth the ungodly. The man that worketh looketh to human deeds to save him; the man that worketh not trusteth for salvation to the mighty acts of God. The man that worketh heareth only laws, maxims, and exhortations; the man that worketh not heareth chiefly God's good news. The man that worketh buildeth his own tower of Babel, yea, lifteth himself by his own bootstraps to heaven; the man that worketh not but hath faith in Jesus has already been laid hold on by the lifting power of God. The man that worketh looketh for blessedness apart from forgiveness; the man that worketh not sings with David, "blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered."

Or, to change the thought, God is the author of the covenant which He made with Abraham. God must needs be the author of any covenant bringing man into fellowship with the Most High. For, "the distance between God and the creature is so great, that although creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant."

It is a Biblical axiom that "apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Hence, this everlasting covenant, in which forgiveness is such a not-

able blessing, was not dedicated without blood. According to God's direction, Abraham divided the sacrificial animals and a smoking furnace and a flaming torch passed like an altar between the pieces (Gen. 15: 9, 10, 17). By the sacrifice of these animals, prefiguring "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unto God," God cut a covenant with Abraham. Passing between the divided portions, the august Author of the covenant pledged the father of the faithful that He would sooner suffer Himself to be divided than break tryst with the Patriarch. Is the concept too tremendous? In order to fulfil this covenant, that He might be just and justify sinners, the eternal Father did veil His face and make Him who knew no sin to be a sin offering for us. Abraham divided animals. We break the bread and take the cup of the new covenant which visualizes the breaking of His body that our sins might be forgiven. Sooner than break His covenant with Abraham, God took of the seed of Abraham and gave the life which He had taken to be broken on the tree that He might grant to those who believe the blessings promised Abraham.

Thus, as Isaiah reminds us, the bonds by which God keeps us in the fellowship of this eternal covenant are the Word which sets forth this history of redemption and the Holy Spirit who illumines our minds to apprehend it (Isaiah 59: 21). The seals that confirmed the covenant of Abraham were bloody sacraments, pointing forward to the Lamb of God. Now that the antitype has come, the types have passed away and unbloody sacra-

ments confirm our confidence in the true blood of the covenant. It was a proper thought that led the First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta to select the Abrahamic covenant window to represent the first step in the history of redemption. Presbyterians have been prone to magnify the representative principle, the covenant theology. But Abraham is the father of all those of every name who believe. The God who before evangelized Abraham reveals Himself to us when by the grace of the Spirit we accept the special revelation which begins again with Abraham and culminates in Christ. The promised Holy Spirit accompanies the hearing of this faith granting us the assurance that we are blessed with Abraham in the covenant of grace.

The Faith of Abraham was Based on God's Word.

Abraham's faith rested on God's Word. God made to Abraham exceeding great and precious promises. He promised Abraham a land, a seed as numerous as the stars, blessings that should make his name great, make him a blessing and cause all nations to be blessed in him. One may count about six specific promises in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, or else regard the Abrahamic promise as one with six propositions. These promises made heavy demands upon Abram; but his faith took God at His Word, and through his faith the Divine triumphed. He moved out upon the promises of God, not knowing whither he went. "Looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God and being

fully assured that what He had promised He was able, also, to perform." His conviction of the truth of God's Word was so strong that he acted upon that conviction, forsaking for it friends and cities and homes, yea, offering to it the child of all his hopes. And this accepting of God's promises as true was and is justifying faith. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3).

This study of the faith of Abraham does not support that antithesis between faith as a rational conviction based on evidence and faith as a regenerative action of the Holy Spirit which characterized certain of the polemics between the Disciples and the Baptists.[3] We are not faced with an 'either - or' dilemma. The necessity for both the Word and the Spirit is beautifully brought out by Calvin:

"The Word is the instrument by which the Lord dispenses to believers the illumination of His Spirit," and conversely, "the Word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit." For "the Lord hath established a kind of mutual connection between the certainty of His Word and His Spirit; so that our minds are filled with a solid reverence for the Word, when by the light of the Spirit we are enabled therein to behold the divine countenance; and on the other hand, without the least fear of mistake, we gladly receive the Spirit, when we recognize Him in His image, that is, in the Word."[4]

3. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church, 1936, p. 668.
4. The Institutes.

Dr. B. Vos makes this illuminating comment on the evangelical doctrine of faith:

"In the principle that faith is a work of God, the other fact is given of its not being the arbitrary choice of man, who simply wills or refuses to exercise it. It has back of it motivation. Nor can it be explained as the upwelling of an irrational mystical urge, such as would need no rational motive. Faith presupposes knowledge, because it needs a mental complex, person or thing, to be occupied about. Therefore, the whole modern idea of preaching Jesus, but preaching Him without a creed, is not only theologically, not merely Scripturally, but psychologically impossible in itself. In fact knowledge is so interwoven with faith that the question arises, whether it be sufficient to call it a prerequisite, and not rather an ingredient of faith. The very names by means of which Jesus would have to be presented to people are nuclei of creed and doctrine. If it were possible to eliminate this, the message would turn to pure magic, but even magic requires some name-sound and cannot be wholly described as preaching without a creed. The vogue into which this program has gotten is to some extent due to the unfortunate, and altogether undeserved, flavor clinging to the term 'creed', as though this necessarily meant a minutely worked out theological structure of belief. That is not meant, but belief there must be before faith can begin to function, and belief includes knowledge (Matt. 8: 10; Luke 7: 9). This knowledge may have been gathered gradually, almost imperceptibly, from countless impressions received

during a briefer or longer period of time, but epistemologically it does not differ from any other kind of mental act however acquired. To be sure, knowledge is not equivalent to full-orbed faith; it must develop into trust, before entitled to that name."[5]

This means that it is misleading to depreciate *what* we believe in comparison with *whom* we believe. As Professor Wernecke reasons, "Other things being equal, the more thoroughly I know my country, my friend, and all the more my Saviour to whom I commit my temporal and eternal destiny, the more firmly will my trust be."[6] Machen concludes, "The knowledge that God has graciously given us of Himself is the basis of our confidence in Him; the God of the Bible is the One whom it is reasonable to trust."[7]

Wherever men are shaking off the trammels of the theology of experience this truth is being, at least to some extent, recognized. Barth insists that faith expresses more than knowledge, but that it invariably expresses knowledge also. The Word of God is directed to man's *ratio* which includes and calls for the co-optation of the intellect. The Swiss theologian uses his wide scholarship to demonstrate that cognition has held an integral place in the Christian conception of faith as that is set forth in the Patristics, the Scholastics and the Reformers. From Melanchthon to Spurgeon three elements have been distinguished in faith, *notitia, assensus* and *fiducia*. Each of these involves cognitive elements.

5. Vos, G., Mimeographed Notes on Biblical Theology, p. 247.
6. Wernecke, "Faith" in the New Testament, p. 97.
7. Machen, What Is Faith?, p. 52. Cf. Calhoun, R. L., "God is absolutely trustworthy or dependable," Christendom, Spring, 1937, p. 215.

Even *fiducia* means that I, on my part, have grounds for relying on the reliability of the other. Reliance on God's reliability presupposes grounds or reasons for believing that God is faithful.[8]

Among mediating scholars, Principal Micklem realizes that "we cannot have faith without some intellectual content," and that "the truths of revelation, like any other truths, are apprehended by our intellect." Indeed, this British thinker reasons that "a wholly undogmatic Christianity is a contradiction in terms, for the very name 'Christianity' connotes some permanent relation to 'Christ'."[9] This content is, in particular, "the mighty acts of God" such as the Incarnation, the Expiation, the Resurrection, the Coming of the Holy Spirit. Or in more common parlance, it is the Gospel—the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

At this point some reader is perhaps objecting, saying or thinking, "You began with the promises to Abraham in the twelfth chapter of Genesis and now you are almost talking about John three-sixteen." The point to our remarks so far is that faith does have an intellectual content whether it be the faith of Abraham or the faith of one who believes the Apostles' Creed, or the faith of one who accepts the gracious gospel of John 3: 16.

And yet in preaching Christ as the special content of saving faith we are not untrue to the example of the Patriarch's faith. The Saviour says, "Your father Abra-

8. Barth, K., The Doctrine of the Word of God, pp. 231, 234, 262, 269, citing Augustine, Aquinas, Bonaventura, Luther, Calvin, Melanchthon, and Quenstedt.

9. Micklem, What Is the Faith? pp. 93, 104, 59.

ham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Abraham believed in a Saviour to come. In his seed God had promised to bless all the nations of the earth. That seed of promise was embodied in one person on only two occasions—in Isaac, the only son of the promise, and in Jesus, the one great seed in whom the promise was fulfilled. The offering up of Isaac was the supreme expression of Abraham's faith and the window through which he looked and saw Christ. The rabbis call the twenty-second chapter of Genesis the "Akedah" and assert that "few chapters of the Bible have had a more potent and lasting influence on the lives and souls of men."[10] "Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah He shall be seen" (Gen. 22: 14, marginal translation). Through the sacrifice of the child of all his faith and hope Abraham glimpsed the love of God. As we climb Mount Moriah with Abraham and enter into the sanctuary of the Patriarch's heart we see in the sacrificial love of the father of the faithful something analogous to the love of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not too much to say that Abraham that day drew close to Calvary, since more than one Gospel text is molded by allusion to this memorable incident: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" and "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten

10. McIntyre, D. M., The Faith of Abraham, Evangelical Quarterly, 8:1.

Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

As Principal McIntyre beautifully concludes: "It is as if the Father had desired to make known to some one of the sons of men His heart of suffering love. It was hard for Isaac to offer up his life in the springtime of his days; it was harder for Abraham to strike the blow. If our Lord died in a sorrow which none can name, how shall we speak of the pain of God, when He turned away His face from the Son of His love, when He was pleased to bruise Him, to put Him to grief?"[11]

The faith of Abraham, like the faith of his heirs, means accepting as true the promises of God, and Christ is the culmination of these promises. "God before evangelized Abraham." Patrick Hamilton, that true son of Abraham whose martyr flames lit the Reformation fires in Scotland, thus describes faith: "Faith cometh of the Word of God." "Faith holdeth stiff by the Word of God; incredulity wavereth here and there. Faith counteth and holdeth God to be true; incredulity holdeth Him false and a liar." "Faith is a certainty or assuredness. He that hath faith wotteth well that God will fulfil His Word. Thou wilt ask me, 'What word?' I answer, 'The Gospel'—Christ is our Saviour; Christ bought us with His blood; Christ washed us with His blood; Christ offered Himself for us; Christ bare our own sins on His own back. He that believeth the Gospel shall be safe." Abraham took God at His Word. The faith which saves

11. Ibid.

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takes God at His Word and receives the salvation promised in that Word.

"Faith stands leaning on His Word."

Abraham Entrusted Himself to the God of the Promises.

Abraham's faith in the promises of God was also a confidence in the promising God. The faith which attached itself to the promises was religious trust in the one making the promises. Abram not only believed the Word of the Lord, "he believed in Jehovah." His assurance of the promises was based on his confidence in the maker of the promises, in God, Most High. God was the great treasure of Abram's life, his shield and exceeding great reward (Gen. 15: 1).

God drew out Abram's confidence in Himself, by condescending to enter into a covenant with Abram, by eating at his tent, by making the most solemn asseverations to him, yea, by taking oath that in blessing He would bless Abraham. And for the children of Abraham God has plighted His faithfulness in even more wonderful ways. Can we doubt Him who hath not withheld His own Son, but hath freely offered Him up for us? Surely since God hath given us Him we may trust Him to make all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For us God the Son hath condescended to become flesh and tabernacle among us. The extent of God's good-will toward us is measured by our Lord's taking our lowly creature nature, and in this human life enduring the contradiction of sinner against Himself,

yea, receiving on Himself our curse that we might have His righteousness and be privileged to call His eternal Father, our Father. In order to render communion with Himself possible "the Diety has stooped from His throne and has, not only in the person of His Son, taken upon Him the veil of human flesh, but, in the person of the Father taken upon Him the veil of our thoughts and permitted us, by His own spoken authority, to conceive him simply and clearly as a loving Father and Friend."[12]

God commendeth His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. In the hour of his deepest agony Martin Luther, a true child of Abraham, found comfort in contemplating the wounds of Christ. Luther's faith, like Abraham's, was a complete and unreserved throwing of himself upon God. Brother Martin began by trying to do enough to make God gracious to him; but he only found peace by realizing that God is gracious already. One can never do enough to earn the grace of God at the end of the road; he must begin with the gracious God. Abraham was certain of God, and hence accepted His promises without wavering. Luther preached unwavering confidence of the heart in Him who hath given Himself to us in Christ Jesus as our Father, hearty assurance of faith because Christ with His work, undertakes our cause.

Or if we would compare the faith of the Old Testament friend of God with the New Testament disciple

12. Ruskin, Frontes Agrestes, cited Moffatt, The Day Before Yesterday, p. 79.

who leaned on his Master's bosom, John, the Beloved, writes:

> "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

A love like that, a God like that elicits a faith which is "the practical and eternal consignment of our spirit into His hands who has redeemed us as our Lord God of Truth."[13]

Abraham's faith was his own personal act. It is man, not God, who believes. The Patriarch's faith was his individual decision to obey the call of God. But this personal action was not a unipersonal act.[14] Abraham lived and moved and had his being in God. Thus he lived in a personalistic atmosphere. He did not act beyond the plan of God. The Almighty encompassed the Patriarch with his providences, motivated him by His promises, gave him a new nature or disposition by His Spirit, and so graciously manifested Himself to Abraham as to evoke his confidence. Thus Abraham's faith was at one and the same time God's work and man's act. Christian faith is a gift of God and a task for man. Faith is our insertion into Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and our own receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation. Thus faith has at least two causes. God is the highest cause. The Holy Spirit is the great efficient cause working faith in us by the use

13. Forsyth, The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 71.
14. Cf. Machen, J. G., The Christian View of Man, p. 293.

of the Word, providential instruments, and His own direct action upon our hearts. And the believer is also an efficient cause, deciding for God, receiving Christ, making confession unto salvation. God's act is the first cause. Man whose heart has been regenerated turns in faith to the Sun of Righteousness as certainly as the sunflower does to the sun, as spontaneously as a hurt child does to his mother. This turning is a real act of man's will, his personal decision, his self-committal. Faith is one's entrusting himself to God. God who has plighted His Word to Abraham by an oath, God who has sealed His covenant with us by the blood of the Redeemer, will not prove false. We trust in the God of the covenant, we confide in the God of Abraham. God, who hath been faithful to the father of the faithful through four millenniums, can be depended on by Abraham's seed in all the years to come, for,

"Thou art the same,
And Thy years shall not fail."

(Heb. 1:12; Ps. 102: 27.)

An adequate apprehension of the trustworthiness of God who hath wrought faith in us issues in what the older divines called the faith of assurance. Archibald Alexander records the remark which an old lady who had given indubitable evidence of eminent piety for more than half a century made to a clergyman: "I have never attained to the faith of assurance—mine is only the faith of reliance." The minister replied, "If you know you have the faith of reliance, you have the faith

of assurance."[15] Faith is 'the grasped grasp' of the faithfulness of God.

Abraham Believed in the Almighty, The Resurrection Power of God.

Abraham's faith in God was specifically trust in that which makes God, God. Abraham's shield was God Almighty. The faith of the father of us all was belief in God who giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4: 16-17). The Patriarch trusted in God to do that which it was impossible for mere nature, purely human resources, or even Providence alone to accomplish. God called on Abraham to believe that He would give him a land, and yet He did not even allow him to begin to secure that land. He promises Abraham a seed, and refused to allow him to adopt Eliezer or to regard his "natural" son as the heir of this promise.

When Abraham was about a hundred years old, and Sarah past the time of child-bearing, God called on him to believe that He would give them a child and through that child a multitude of descendants. And then the Almighty further called on Abraham to offer the child of promise in a confidence that God could and would raise Isaac from the dead and so keep His promise. Thus, Abraham's faith was necessarily a trust in the omnipotence, in the resurrection power of God. He believed, giving glory to God. He staggered not at the promises of God, but waxed strong through faith, being

15. Alexander, A., Bible Truth, p. 154.

fully assured that what God had promised He was able also to perform in spite of the deadness of Abraham's own body, the deadness of Sarah's womb, or the death dealing power of knife and fire. God called on Abraham to believe what was difficult, yea, impossible, for nature to do; but always by promises, by covenants, by an oath, God increased the assurance that He would keep His word. Through this discipline of life God focused the faith of the father of all them that believe upon His own creative interpositions. Abraham's faith was faith in the miracle-working power of God. He looked for the flash of the will that can do what even a God-guided providence is not sufficient to do. The Patriarch believed in God, Most High, Maker and Possessor of heaven and earth, who has endowed nature with the order and laws which she possesses, but who as God Almighty is able to intervene in supernatural ways to redeem sinners from the pit into which by the will of man they have fallen.

Abraham's faith differs, then, in several particulars, from the faith of many philosophers and scientists. Abraham believed that God called not being into being (Rom. 4:17), that the universe was made by God; Plato held that the universe was eternal; Jeans holds that it was made by chance. Abraham believed that God is the Possessor of the whole earth, governing in the natural order which He prescribed as truly as in the spiritual realm (Gen. 18); current science limits God's power to spiritual matters and exempts natural law from His control.

Abraham bound Isaac to the altar in the firm conviction that God would miraculously raise him from the dead and through him fulfil His promises; naturalistic science would either entirely rule out the possibility of a resurrection—even the resurrecton of Jesus,[16] on account of the "fixed" laws of nature; or else relegate it to the infinitesimal possibility of chance based on the purely statistical character of natural law.[17] According to the one Abraham was required to reckon God a liar, in which case there was no reason to obey His command to offer Isaac; according to the other he must hold that the chances of Isaac's resurrection were so slight as to be negligible. In neither case could he have climbed Mount Moriah, *believing* in God who giveth life to the dead (Rom. 4:17) and accounting Him able to raise up Isaac from the dead, from whence he did also in a figure receive him back (Heb. 11: 19). Abraham's faith in the power of God to fulfil His promise, even by raising the dead, was the concrete expression of his confidence in the absoluteness and utter sufficiency of God.

We have the faith of Abraham when "we believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our offenses and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4: 24-25). "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou

16. Mather, K. F., Science in Search of God, N. Y., 1928. In a debate with J. R. Stratton at Harvard, Session 1926-7, the author of this volume would not answer the question, Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Cf. Chapter Miracle and Prayer in a Law-Abiding Universe.

17. Bavink, B., Science and God, p. 132.

shalt be saved" (Rom. 10: 9). Through this concrete manifestation of supernatural power we are believers in God that raised Christ from the dead and gave Him glory; so that our faith and hope might be in God (I Peter 1: 20).

We no more affirm that the raising of Jesus from the dead is easy to believe than we affirm that it was easy for Abraham to believe that God would give life to the putatively dead Isaac. But according to the texts already quoted, this is the faith which God requires of those who would escape His wrath and curse due to them for sin. As long as our attention is directed to the God that human thought is postulating, it will be impossible to believe in the Resurrection. But the living God who speaks in the Bible, the Creator, the God of Abraham, is able to raise Jesus our Lord from the dead; and the sermons in Acts, the primitive *credo* (I Cor. 15: 3f), the Gospel accounts offer adequate evidence that He did just that. Moreover, we rejoice in this manifestation of God's hand as evidencing the fact that His power is adequate for any and every emergency which we may encounter; yea, since Christ was raised for our justification, as evidencing not only His power in the world of physical forces, but also His saving power in the sharpest emergency the soul ever faces—sin and its penalty. We have no interest in preaching either a finite, limited deity whose plans and resources are not sufficient for the problems which beset our days, or the god of idealism whose truths spell only the doom of us poor sinners. We are concerned to belong to the goodly fellowship

of the mother church of Christendom, a church that unitedly prayed to the Lord who didst make heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is, a church that was filled with the Holy Spirit, a church that gave a mighty and unequivocable testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, a church that was blessed with great grace and brotherly love (Acts 4: 23-34).

Apart from the resurrection of Jesus, Christianity can too easily be interpreted as a mere idealization of faith. There are university professors who, denying the Resurrection, present a "Christianity" which is more Platonic than Pauline. And to attract this group many metropolitan ministers sign affirmations compromising the miracles of Christ's person and power, and make such vague statements of His objective presence that only the unsophisticated think they are teaching the real resurrection of our Lord.

However, whenever the shadow of the cross falls athwart a church and those who in their hearts have given up the faith find it no longer popular to profess Christianity, then the true believers realize afresh that "if Christ be not risen our faith is vain." Sir William A. Lloyd tells the story of an old Gregorian priest leading the remnant of his flock from the home village where many of their number had been massacred and outraged by the Turks, to seek a haven of refuge. And as they trudge on in hunger, pain and sorrow the question arises, is it all worth while, is our faith true, only they phrase it: *Is Christ risen?* And the valiant-hearted Christian shepherd stems the tide of their doubts with

his own unshakeable conviction that Christ is risen, until they climb a last rise and catch the glint of the stars and stripes flying over a Near East Orphanage, a sign of hope that justified the confidence of the old priest and re-established his little band in the faith that, *Christos Anesti, Alithos Anesti.*[18]

In the name of the suffering church of Russia, Dr. Nicholas Arseniev insists on the victory of the bodily resurrection of Christ.[19] In Barth's *Credo,* dedicated to the pastors who stand for the Christian faith in Germany, there is a vigorous defense of the corporeal resurrection and of the Virgin Birth of Christ. J. Gresham Machen died outside the fellowship of the church in which he had ministered for years bcause his faith could not tolerate compromises[20] on such matters as the Virgin Birth and the bodily resurrection of Christ. Will it take a cross to raise us to a vivid faith in the real resurrection of our Lord, to the faith of Abraham, to the fellowship of the Apostles? Verily, the lines are fallen in pleasant places for those whose fellowship does not compromise the faith, and whose faith does not separate a fellowship.

By that resurrection power in which the Patriarch believed, the God of Abraham raised from the dead the greatest of his seed, and has carried onward the Christian movement to this momentous hour. Nor will our problems ever become too intricate, or our burdens too heavy for this Sovereign, Absolute God, who knoweth

18. "Christos Anesti," Philadelphia, 1923.
19. Arseniev, N., We Beheld His Glory, 1936.
20. Concretely manifest in The Auburn Affirmation.

the end from the beginning. The same Almighty Hand which raised Jesus our Lord from the dead can revive and re-establish Christian faith in America. Supernaturalism is the vital breath of saving grace. May God, who giveth life to the dead, quicken us from dead works and empty forms to a living faith in the power of godliness!

Abraham's Faith Issued in Fellowship with God and Obedience to Him.

A faith of this character logically attached itself to God to the exclusion of all other supports and attachments. In at least two ways Abraham's faith was a spiritualizing principle. God led him to the place where he could only look for the fulfillment of the promise in God. He had to depend on God alone to do what no other power was able to do. And then God postponed the fulfillment of the promise so that it was impossible to accept the gift and forget the giver. The gift was hidden in the Giver. God kept the patriarchs in the sphere of faith, living as seeing Him that is invisible, drinking from the fountain, Beer-lahai-roi, living truly spiritual lives. "Though they did not receive the promises, they saw them afar and greeted them and lived and died assured that the God who had made Himself their portion would also fulfil His promises to them. Thus, they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth" (Heb. 11: 13) and thus, God monopolized Abraham until the entire life and personality of the patriarch were concentrated under the idea of God.

The city from which he came beckoned for his return,

Sodom, the city of the plain, opened her palaces to him, but Abraham looked instead for a city that hath foundations whose maker and builder is God. In the choices of life Abraham lived *coram Deo*. More than that, he *died in faith* (Heb. 11: 13). And so the man who began life in a polytheistic city and family became the father of all those whose trust is stayed on the eternal God. Those who entrust themselves to the Everlasting Arms and take the pilgrim trek to the heavenly city shall recline with "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11). "For God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:14). And according to our Lord, the designation of Jehovah as the God of Abraham (Ex. 3:6; Mk. 12:26-27) specifically means that the Patriarch was and is alive centuries and millenniums after the death of his body. The faith of Abraham attests a fellowship with God that the grave cannot sever. The Gospel which was preached beforehand unto Abraham is the Gospel of the glorious and ever-living life.

Those who walk by faith and not by sight have their citizenship with Abraham in heaven. Our Lord pronounced His last beatitude upon those who not having seen yet have believed (John 20: 29). Peter commends the children of Abraham who love a Saviour that they have not seen, and though they see Him not yet believe (I Peter 1: 8). "What the *Christian Institution* did for the sixteenth century was to make the unseen government and authority of God, to which all must bow, as

visible to the eye of faith as the mechanism of the medieval Church had been to the eye of sense. It proclaimed that the basis of all Christian faith was the Word of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures; it taught the absolute dependence of all things on God Himself immediately and directly; it declared that the sin of man was such that, apart from the working of the free grace of God, there could be neither pardon nor amendment, nor salvation; and it wove all these thoughts into a logical unity which revealed to the intellectual eye of its generation the 'House of God not made with hands eternal in the heavens.' Men as they gazed saw that they were in the immediate presence of the authority of God Himself, directly responsible to him."[21] The blessing of the Lord's Table is that here by faith we handle things unseen. These simple elements confirm our confidence in the unseen verities: that our sins are forgiven us for His Name's sake; that we are children welcome to the Father's table, that we are fed with the bread of life unto our sanctification and growth in grace; that in Christ and the benefits of His redemption we have peace of conscience, assurance of God's love, joy in the Holy Ghost and perseverance in grace unto the end.

The faith of Abraham flowered into a life of fellowship with God, and fruited in works of obedience and diligent instruction to his household that they keep the way of Jehovah and do righteousness and justice (Gen. 18: 19). In gracious condescension the God of heaven

21. Lindsay, A History of the Reformation, II:157.

and earth had fellowship with Abraham by solemn covenants, by eating at his tent, by friendly intercourse in which He revealed to Abraham the doom He had decreed for Sodom. "For," says Jehovah, "I have known him." That is, God so set His affection, His intense love, upon Abraham that it was inappropriate to hide anything from him. Nor can the children of Abraham read these lines without remembering Him into whose hands the Father had given all things, who came forth from God and returned to God; but who graciously gathered His own about the Table of His love and spake His heart: "No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard from the Father I have made known unto you." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I have commanded you" (John 13: 3; 15: 13-15). In these verses, three times over, the Saviour calls us His friends, as in Scripture Abraham is thrice called the friend of God. In the theophanies God drew Abraham into the closest intercourse with Himself; in Immanuel, Jehovah incarnate of the seed of Abraham, our Lord Jesus Christ, established on earth the fellowship which is with the Father and with His Son (I John 1: 1). In both cases trust in the Most High ripens into confidence, love, friendship, communion.

The wonder of this fellowship is symbolized by the Beloved Disciple leaning on Jesus' bosom; the issue

of it is an inseparable fellowship with Christ which He Himself once described as "Abraham's bosom."

On his part, Abraham never abused the high and holy privilege God granted him. He walked humbly with God. Yea, falling on his face and bowing himself to the earth before his Maker, the Patriarch used the language of creaturely dependence. "Behold now, I, who am but dust and ashes, have taken unto me to speak unto the Lord." Through these words there throbs something of the mind of Augustine, the Christian philosopher, who declared that the creature was always leaning over the abyss of nothingness and was only prevented from falling in by the hand of God.

This humble trust and fear of the Most High wrought an obedient will in the heart of Abraham. Abraham's faith was a dynamic giving direction to his life. "By faith Abraham when he was called, obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went." But as certainly as Divine omniscience sees farther than human foresight, so surely is it more reasonable to walk by faith than by sight. Committing their ways to His unerring guidance, many of the children of Abraham, ministers, missionaries, obedient believers, have heeded God's call, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee," and have found that "into the land of Canaan they came." Those who give up houses or lands or loved ones for His sake find a hundredfold more in this life and in the life to come, life everlasting.

And here again the faith of Abraham must be our

example. The older ministers had an axiom that those who forefancy their deathbed need not fear it. This is a question better considered now than later. "When the days of a man are counted, and His business done," will it require a microscope to detect some faint evidence of his faith? It took no magnifying glass to find the faith of Abraham. It is now well-nigh four millenniums since Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and today those who desire to be considered children of Abraham are as numberless as the stars of the heaven. There is scarcely a country on this planet where Abraham is not celebrated by Jew or Christian or Mohammedan as the father of the faithful. Or to take more modern examples, a visitor to Mount Berry does not need to carry a microscope to discover the faith of the beloved Founder of the Berry Schools. That faith is written so large that he who runs must read.

The sojourner in Clinton does not require a high-powered instrument to uncover the faith of William P. Jacobs. "Three quarters of a century ago a frail, physically weak, financially poor lad, failing in health and eyesight, but strong in prayer and in God, came to Western South Carolina from the theological seminary, and there began a ministry which turned a hell-hole into a heaven, and founded the Presbyterian College and Thornwell Orphanage, that the faith of our fathers might prevail. Out of chaos and against impossible odds, with faith his only weapon, he founded and built two of God's greatest instruments for the perpetuating of that same faith." "There is no gift more

precious than the faith of our fathers."[22] And we walk in the faith of our fathers when, like them, we show our faith by our works.

There is a current misapprehension of the two great characters of the Old Testament, Moses and Abraham. The former is sometimes set over against the latter, as though the one were the complete antithesis of the other. Moses is represented as the man of law; and Abraham as the man of faith. Now, we agree that there is a relative difference, a difference of emphasis, between the lives of the two Old Testament saints; so that one may be regarded as a symbol of law, the other of faith. But we misconstrue Scripture when we seek to make the contrast absolute. Moses has a noble niche in the hall of heroes of the faith: "By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt."[23]

And conversely God, Himself, summarizes the life of Abraham as a life of obedience to His will: "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."[23]

In other words, all these things come to pass for our example. God's dealing with both Moses and Abraham are for our instruction. And while the emphases vary, both were men of faith and of obedience. The com-

22. Jacobs, William P., (Jr.) If Ye Have Faith and Doubt Not, Clinton, 1936.
23. Cf. Allis, O. T., The Evangelical Quarterly, 8:3; 288-9.

plete Biblical position is not Abraham or Moses; but Abraham and Moses. In heaven the Redeemed sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. If by faith we are Jesus' friends we take His yoke upon ourselves; if we love Him we will keep His commandments. Each voice in God's celestial chorus has its own individual tones. One star differeth from another star in glory. But the voices of the saints blend in the heavenly anthem; and Abraham and Moses unite in the refrain:

> *"Trust and obey,*
> *For there's no other way*
> *To be happy in Jesus*
> *But to trust and obey."*

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